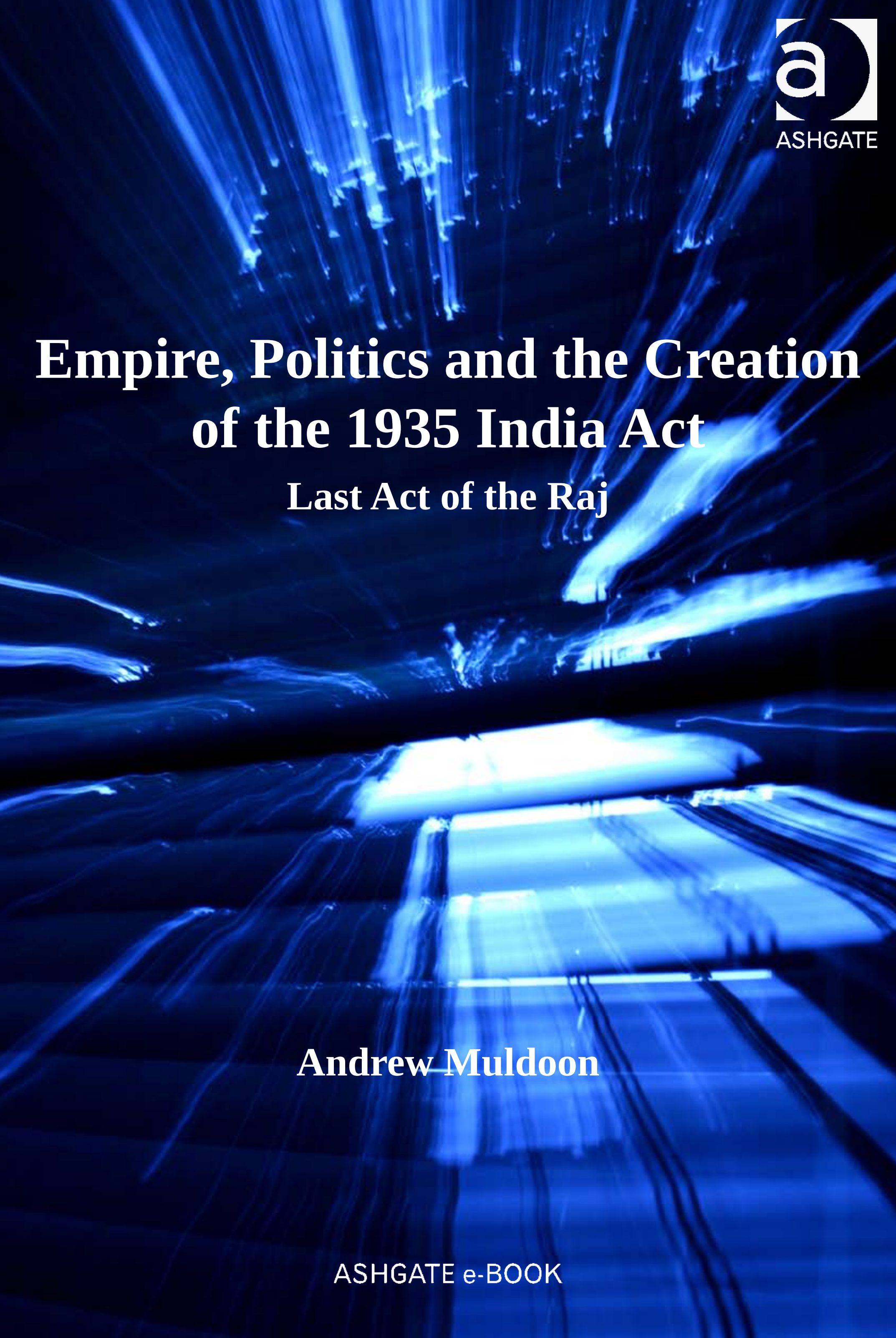


Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act

Last Act of the Raj

Andrew Muldoon

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EMPIRE, POLITICS AND THE CREATION OF THE 1935 INDIA ACT

For my parents

and

for Cristina and Aidan

Empire, Politics and the Creation of the 1935 India Act

Last Act of the Raj

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ASHGATE

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This book is also for my wife and my son with love. From Hammonasset Beach to Denver, Cristina Sloan Muldoon has made me happier than I ever thought I could be. Aidan Muldoon thinks this book needs more hippos.

I speak the truth. I believe in truth, pure truth. I have no use for those people who say to the Indians. "This is a wonderful constitution to lead you to the desired goal, etc." and then say to others, "This is all right, we have got it all safely tied up. Do not be anxious, the Indians will not be able to do anything." I hate that kind of thing.

(Winston Churchill, Interview with Mira Slade, 11 November 1934)

I do not believe that politicians in India are very different from politicians here.

(Samuel Hoare, House of Commons, 27 March 1933)

Your nationalism must not be divorced from rationalism … Emotion is good … but conviction is better.

(T.B. Sapru, Convocation address, Patna University, 30 November 1935)

The Congress stands for complete independence and the typical representative Indian is the man behind the plough.

(Jawaharlal Nehru, Speech at Lucknow, 28 July 1931)

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Introduction

The Government of India Act in 1935 was the culmination of nearly six years of legislative, administrative and political work. The Act, a scheme for a federated India of autonomous provinces and princely states, all ultimately under continued British rule, itself ran to hundreds of pages, replete with annexes, schedules and draft legal instruments. The construction of the Act required thousands of hours of testimony and deliberation in committees, parliamentary commissions and fact-finding inquiries, as well as volumes of print: surveys, submissions of evidence and a substantial part of recorded parliamentary debates. This proposal for Indian political reform was the signature political event between the advent of the National Government in 1931 and the abdication crisis five years later. It was a consistent part of political discourse, especially as it threatened to divide the membership of Britain's most successful political party at the time. And, of course, the cast of characters involved in this controversy included some notable and arresting figures, specifically M.K. Gandhi and Winston Churchill. Unsurprisingly, the Secretary of State for India who had introduced the legislation at Westminster was ultimately unable to shepherd it through its final stages in the Commons: the effort was too great for one man alone. The Secretary's understudy, R.A. Butler (in a significant, yet supporting, role for the first but not last time in a distinguished career), stepped in to carry the Bill forward.

The 1935 Act's impact was as significant as the controversy it had generated. Its provision for the election of provincial legislatures gave the Indian National Congress, the party of Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, a vital opening to establish firmly their authority to speak as a truly representative Indian political force. Even after 1947 and Indian independence, the Act remained influential, as the new state adopted its own version of the federal framework, one that continued to feature a division of powers between the central and provincial governments with, as in the British version, significant residuary prerogatives for provincial governors and the federal center itself.

Despite the tremendous attention this Act garnered in British political life, the personalities involved in its creation and the continued importance of this legislation for the constitutional framework of contemporary India, the Act has not received the sustained historical or scholarly attention one might expect. There is certainly a great deal of material to work with; in fact there may be almost too much. Incisive specialist investigations of aspects of the India Act do indeed exist: Ian Copland's examination of the Indian princes in the interwar years is a notable example, as are the politically-focused works of Stuart Ball, Graham Stewart and Basudev

Chatterji.[1] The Act, and the events surrounding it, does appear prominently as well in larger studies of figures like Gandhi, Churchill, Nehru and Stanley Baldwin, and of less well-known – but significant – actors like Samuel Hoare, Edward Irwin and T.B. Sapru. R.J. Moore and Carl Bridge are the authors of the two very detailed examinations of the process of negotiation, calculation and political maneuvering that led to the Act. These works, exhaustive in their use of archival evidence and articulate in their delineation of a complicated narrative, stand as the as the best overviews of this event to date, and likely will remain authoritative hereafter.[2] This present effort is not an attempt to dislodge or supersede Moore and Bridge; it is instead an attempt to treat the creation of the 1935 Act in a larger context and as a broader imperial event that sheds lights on multiple aspects of the British colonial experience in India as the Raj neared its end.

Historians have often used specific events as prisms through which they might investigate larger themes or issues in a particular place and at a particular time. In South Asian history specifically, those affiliated with the Subaltern Studies movement, and those who followed in their wake, have employed this approach both provocatively and well in their efforts to engage and complicate existing colonial and post-colonial narratives of the emergence of the Indian state. Among others, this group includes Shahid Amin, Vinayak Chaturvedi and Gyanendra Pandey.[3] In studying British imperial attitudes and the relationship between colony and metropole, however, a particular sort of focused examination has proved very useful: that concerning specific instances of colonial policy-making or legislation. Mrinalini Sinha, Phillippa Levine and David Arnold are among those who have demonstrated that looking at certain political moments or decisions (the Ilbert Bill, the Contagious Diseases Acts, vagrancy laws) creates openings for far more expansive understandings of colonial society, imperial culture and even the contested meaning of "empire" itself.[4] Colonial policy formation or legislative action offers historians an excellent opportunity for such examinations,

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1 Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the endgame of Empire, 1917–1947* (Cambridge, 1997); Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929–1932* (New Haven, 1988); Graham Stewart, *Burying Caesar: The Churchill-Chamberlain Rivalry* (London, 1999); Basudev Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire: Lancashire and British Policy in India, 1919–1939* (Delhi, 1992).

2 Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi, 1986); R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917–1940* (Oxford, 1974).

3 Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922–1992* (Berkeley, 1995); Vinayak Chaturvedi, *Peasant Pasts: History and Memory in Western India* (Berkeley, 2007): Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North* India (Delhi, 1990).

4 Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1995); Philippa Levine, "Rereading the 1890s: Venereal Disease as 'Constitutional Crisis' in Britain and British India," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55/3 (1996), pp. 585–612; David Arnold, "European orphans and vagrants in India in the nineteenth century" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 7/2 (1979), pp. 104–127.

as these events prompted very public discussions of empire featuring multiple actors, interest groups, discourses and vocabularies. This book takes a similar conceptual framework, but focuses on the India Act, a piece of legislation with a much lengthier and more involved history than those enactments mentioned above; it thus lends itself to an even more wide-ranging investigation of multiple aspects of Britain's late imperial experiences.

The India Act as an Imperial Event

This book uses the India Act, and the story of its inception and implementation, as a means of exploring larger questions in the history of British India and in the history of Britain's empire overall. This is not a detailed account of the extensive political undertakings that shaped the federal plan for India – Bridge and Moore have handled that task already. Rather this work focuses on what the Act, and all that went into it, says about these issues: the nature of colonial government in India; the role of culture and perception in imperial policy-making; and the place of empire in British politics and public attitudes. In addressing these general concerns, the book will also meet important subsidiary issues, including the complicated relationships of some Indians to the colonial administration and the challenge of interpreting a mammoth colonial archive.

The vision many in British governing circles had of the India Act raises important questions about the ways in which the Raj worked. As those who have examined the India Act have noticed, its supporters held the sanguine view that the plan for federation and provincial autonomy would effectively counter a growing nationalist movement by sowing discord in the Indian National Congress and distracting Indians from the movement itself.[5] The questions, however, remain: just why did these politicians and colonial officials believe this, and why did they pursue this strategy even as evidence increased against its efficacy? The answer lies in the beliefs many British elites held about India, and in the ways in which these understandings shaped, and were shaped by, methods and institutions for acquiring information in the colonial state. The mixture of colonial cultural assumptions, a sclerotic intelligence apparatus and a dynamic Indian political environment produced a narrow, but pervasive, and persuasive, understanding of India among those most responsible for governing and sustaining the Raj. In their efforts to "make a society legible," as the political theorist James Scott has

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[5] This is Bridge's and Moore's argument. See: R.J. Moore, *Escape from Empire: The Attlee Government and the Indian Problem* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 3–4. For similar contentions, see: John Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policies between the Wars," *Historical Journal* 23/3 (1980), pp. 657–679; D.A. Low, *Eclipse of Empire* (Cambridge, 1991), esp. pp. 88–94.

put it, British administrators "saw like a state" and thus transformed "what was a social hieroglyph into a legible and administratively more convenient format."[6] While Scott might assert that all states work this way, the problem of the British colonial state was not that it existed as such, but was that it was a certain sort of state, one informed by a specific culture and one underpinned by a flawed and overtaxed administrative structure. Its existence as a colonial state, moreover, imbued it with even further difficulty, notably in its problematic interaction with indigenous sources of information.

In addressing these issues, this book engages with a larger and contested debate over colonial governance and intelligence assessment in particular, and over the creation of "colonial knowledge" in general. Christopher Bayly has addressed both concerns extensively in his *Empire and Information*, though it is an account which deals only briefly with the twentieth century, and he has encouraged historians to continue work on imperial intelligence, which "remains a poorly studied area."[7] Regarding the importance of cultural belief, and its role in essentializing Indians and other colonial subjects, this book argues for the continued significance of cultural nostrums in shaping imperial policy, but it also contends that this aspect of colonial administration owed something as well to the failure of other imperial institutions to keep pace with rapidly changing situations on the ground. Furthermore, by tackling topics like the influence of cultural stereotyping in foreign policy construction and the problematic nature of intelligence collection, this book speaks to issues that continue to resonate in a contemporary world where ideas of a "clash of civilizations" or of an "Arab street" shape popular discourse, and where the realization of the constructed and contingent nature of intelligence material is only beginning to emerge.

While it contends with these issues of colonial supervision and epistemology, the work at hand also uses the extensive public discussions and controversies sparked in Britain by these Indian proposals to investigate another topic of very recent historical interest: the impact of empire upon those who lived at its center. Bernard Porter has recently challenged a prevailing historiography that sees aspects of empire and imperial culture as embedded, to some degree at least, in British public and political life in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries especially.[8] The sustained public attention the Indian federal plan received, and the notable

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6 James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1998), pp. 2–3. Scott notes that such an approach "produces an overall, aggregate, synoptic view of a selective reality" (p. 11).

7 C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence gathering and social communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 3.

8 Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004); Porter is responding to, among others, Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Chicago, 2002).

political rows it provoked, provide some accessible material for considering the prevalence and intensity of imperial attitudes in Britain. This material requires careful handling, however. Indian debates occurred largely in elite governing circles and in the newspapers and institutions that served them. And while vituperative and contentious rhetoric marked disputes over India, these confrontations largely remained within the confines of the Conservative party. The amount of attention paid to the Indian legislation and the real feeling evident in public argument, therefore, cannot stand as confirmation that imperial feeling permeated all of British society. The evidence, or at least a superficial reading of it, simply suggests that those parts of British society most likely to be concerned with empire were indeed so. From this restricted sample, however, some questions about the character and depth of British imperial sentiment do emerge upon closer examination. Among even those most publicly associated with the maintenance and defense of the Empire, there was, at a minimum, some division about what empire was and what it ought to be. One wing of the party remained wedded to an Indian-centered empire, either out of personal or economic attachment to the Raj, or, as in the case of Churchill, out of concern for Britain's global strategic position. Other Conservatives argued for the centrality of the Dominions in an economically focused imperial system that encouraged inter-imperial free trade and maintained the international position of the pound sterling. Among long-time Tories, moreover, memories of the Irish "surrender" in 1921, and of Conservatives who had presided over it, had not faded; the specter of Ireland haunted both those who wished to pass Indian reforms and their foes. Power within the party ultimately resided with those who favored the 1935 Act, but the strength of the opposition made the plan's proponents work harder than they might have expected.

If the debate over India showed that Britain's party of empire did not share one vision of the imperial future, the conduct of this contest also hinted that, among the great majority of the party that adhered to no one specific imperial sensibility, there were limits to Conservative enthusiasm for maintaining the empire in its late nineteenth-century form. Stanley Baldwin and the Tory leadership, most of whom supported the federal scheme, understood this and made use of it as well. In their initial appeals for party backing, Baldwin and others focused on how these reforms would secure India to the Empire for the future. Unsure that they had convinced the party membership of this, these senior Conservatives employed another, more deliberate tack, one which showed that they were as willing to pursue a cynical approach with their own party as they were with Indians. The Conservative leadership turned the question of Indian policy into a test of party confidence in them, forcing Tories to choose between concerns over the Raj's future and fears of a party split that might bring down the Conservative-dominated National Government and allow the Labour party to recover political prestige. Preserving a certain idea of empire paled next to preserving power at home.

The Road to 1937

As historians of British rule in India know well, the Raj was a monument to, and a celebration of, bureaucratic capability. Those who worked within the colonial state grappled with an overwhelming volume of paperwork, files and memoranda; those who study this period face a similar task now, down to the difficulties of deciphering scrawled notes and references in the margins of documents. This book draws on a multitude of sources as it makes its case, including administrative records, public and private correspondence, editorial observations and even oral histories. With such an embarrassment of sources, it has been possible both to read broadly across a small chronological period, and also to read important documents critically, for what they contain and what they leave out.[9] This approach has helped to produce the combination of narrative and analysis that follows.

Chapter 1 assesses how British officials, administrators and politicians encountered information about India and from India. It demonstrates how understandings of India, and of Indian political behavior and sensibilities in particular, emerged from the complicated inter-relationship of imperial culture and the capabilities of the colonial state. Chapters 2 and 3 chart the progress of a particular idea, that of Indian federation as a means of defusing nationalist agitation, from New Delhi to Westminster between 1929 and 1932. These chapters pay specific attention to the impact of certain colonial prejudices upon administrative reactions to the resurgence of Gandhi and the Congress, and to the complex dynamics that marked exchanges of political information between these colonial officials and certain well-placed Indians. The book then turns to the actual process of the federal scheme from proposal to legislation; here the emphasis lies again on British efforts to read Indian political tendencies, and Chapter 4 shows just how deeply ideas about Indians' capacities shaped the exact form the eventual 1935 Act took. The following two chapters stand apart from this narrative somewhat, as they look at the ways in which the debate over India revealed tensions within the Conservative party over the meaning of the Empire itself, the decline of traditional understandings of the relationship of India to British economic interests, and the importance of a domestic political context for imperial decision-making. Chapter 7 describes the translation of the 1935 Act into practice in India, exemplified by the 1937 provincial elections whose results surprised many in governing circles and demonstrated both the power of the nationalist cause and the shakiness of the colonial state's claim to know the "real" India.

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[9] On the perils and promise of research in such extensive imperial archives, see A.J. Stockwell, "British Decolonization: The Record and the Records," *Contemporary European History* 15/4 (2006), pp. 573–583.

Chapter 1

India Interpreted and Imagined: Culture, Intelligence and Policy-making in the Late-Colonial State

To stand in Mumbai outside a railway terminus, or any other municipal building tottering under Indo-Saracenic minarets and crenellations, is to understand the extent to which British cultural perceptions and prejudices influenced British rule in India. To review old Indian Army photos of massed Sikh or Gurkha regiments is to do so as well, albeit in the Oriental and Indian section of the British Library (near the only slightly less crenellated St. Pancras Station.) "Colonial forms of knowledge," as Bernard Cohn so aptly put it, underpinned myriad aspects of government policy under the Raj. Indian Army recruitment followed the doctrine of "martial races;" colonial cantonments and stations braced themselves against a miasmic, enervating climate; and judicial proceedings reified gendered ideas about Indians and colonials alike.[1] These colonial perceptions also affected and influenced British interactions with the Indian nationalist movement, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, when British administrators confronted a burgeoning Indian National Congress. With a few notable exceptions, however, most historical accounts of this encounter have tended to focus on the power politics of Britain's reaction to Indian nationalism, paying particular attention to the strategies whereby colonial policy-makers sought to defuse or derail the nationalists, but spending less time on just how and why these British administrators believed that they could maintain the Raj through the deployment of divide-and-rule or bait-and-switch tactics. This confidence was, in fact, the product of a system of cultural understandings about India which had pervaded British colonial and political circles since the late nineteenth century, and from which those who dealt with the demands of the Indian nationalists were hardly immune. Indeed, as an American diplomatic historian has put it, policy-makers are human too: they "are subjects of culture, not just policy wonks who shed their images of others like

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[1] There is now an immense and outstanding literature on this topic. For the examples cited above, see: Bernard Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (Delhi, 1987); Richard Fox, *Lions of the Punjab* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985); Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The "Manly Englishman" and the "Effeminate Bengali" in the late nineteenth century* (Manchester, 1995); Thomas Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* (Cambridge, 1994); Dane Kennedy, *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996).

raincoats at the office door."[2] Peter Jackson has noted succinctly that "intelligence officers would be rare creatures indeed if they were able to step outside of the cultural and ideological context in which they operate to make truly objective assessments of national security issues."[3] In a very recent study of British policies in Iraq, Priya Satia has also argued that "the activities of the modern state are shaped by the cultural imagination."[4] And the lessons of the British encounter with India remain important even now, especially in a world where policy-makers are tempted to see themselves as engaged in a "clash of civilizations" based on essentialized stereotypes and tropes of cultural behavior, both in East and West.[5] British politicians, Cabinet members, civil servants and administrators in India all possessed certain beliefs about India and Indian politics in particular, including the sense that the Indian National Congress was not an irresistible force; that there was little national unity to India; and that there were Indians with whom the Raj might find enough accommodation to sustain itself.[6] Colonial cultural sensibilities underlay many of these notions about Indian politics and remained powerful enough, for several reasons, to sustain British beliefs in the efficacy of certain actions even when all evidence from India indicated otherwise. Carl Bridge and Gerald Studdert-Kennedy have offered some of the only analysis of the importance of the colonial context and culture for the shaping of the 1935 Act, but their focused studies have not reflected just how thoroughly imperial perceptions pervaded the thoughts and deeds of British policy-makers, enmeshing them in a web of colonial discourse that often obscured their understanding of Indian developments.[7] In fact, this

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2 Andrew Rotter, "Saidism without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History," *American Historical Review* (October 2000), pp. 1205–1217. D.A. Low has noted in a similar vain that "it is quite erroneous to suggest that all this somehow unfolded within an imperialist vacuum; worse still, that imperial rulers were the olympian masters of their empire's fate." Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism: The imprint of ambiguity 1929–1942* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 6.

3 Peter Jackson, "The Politics of Secret Service in War, Cold War and Imperial Retreat," *Twentieth Century British History*, 14/4 (2003), pp. 413–421.

4 Priya Satia, "The Defense of Inhumanity: Air Control and the British Idea of Arabia," *American Historical Review* 111/1 (February 2006), pp. 16–51, esp. p. 18.

5 For recent work on this subject, see Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945* (Chapel Hill, 2002); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the middlebrow imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003).

6 Carl Bridge, *Holding India to the Empire: The British Conservative Party and the 1935 Constitution* (New Delhi, 1986); R.J. Moore, *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917–1940* (Oxford, 1974); Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*; Ian Copland, *The Princes of India in the endgame of Empire, 1917–1947* (Cambridge, 1997).

7 Carl Bridge, "Conservatism and Indian Reform (1929–1939): Towards a Prerequisites Model in Imperial Constitution-Making?" *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 4/1 (1976), pp. 176–193; Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, *British Christians, Indian Nationalists and the Raj* (Delhi, 1991).

investigation owes much to the challenge laid down by Studdert-Kennedy: "The discourse or structure of ideas in terms of which the 'India Public' in England interpreted India's distinctive fusion of religion and nationalism has not been fully explored."[8] As it turns out, this discursive understanding of India was powerful; it was entrenched; and it often found just enough reinforcement in Indian events to sustain itself in British minds which, after all, needed very little persuasion.

The Tories and the Raj

The late 1920s and early 1930s saw a resurgence of aggressive Indian nationalism, led by the Indian National Congress under the direction of M.K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. In Britain there was little question but that there must be a response to this development. By virtue of its electoral success, the Conservative Party found itself called upon most often to construct the British reply to Indian demands for political autonomy and even independence. For the Tories, and for others of a similar social or educational background who served the Raj, India conjured up a series of images and understandings, ones which pervaded the higher echelons of British society. It was no surprise that the Conservative leadership had a deep and abiding interest in British-ruled India. Not only did many of these senior Tories, as we shall see, share all sorts of connections to those who ruled India directly, but also the party itself drew its strength from those parts of Britain (England, really) which had deep and often self-interested stakes in the subcontinent, and in the British Empire overall.

A brief review of the geography of Conservatism illustrates this point. The Southern and Western regions of England, a bastion of Tory support, included Sussex, Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. These counties contained a large number of rural, agricultural constituencies which had traditionally supported Conservative MPs, although they would express great dissatisfaction with the Tory leadership over tariff policy in the late 1920s. Furthermore, the small urban areas in this region included not only military towns like Aldershot and Dartmouth, but also places like Bournemouth, Eastbourne and Cheltenham, the preferred retirement spots of retired military officers and civil servants, many of whom had seen service abroad in the Indian Army or the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and who had returned, in Kipling's words, to "Death

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[8] Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, *Providence & the Raj: Imperial Mission and Missionary Imperialism* (New Delhi, 1998), p. 47. For example, Bridge notes that Conservative policy-makers in the 1930s shared the "same mental furniture of ideas about India," but he does not outline these prejudices beyond a general statement about Tory belief in the unsuitability of Indians for self-government. See Bridge, "Conservatism and Indian Reform," p. 186.

in Bath or Bournemouth."[9] These former colonial inhabitants were likely, as well, to have strong ties to friends and relations who remained in India or, for another example, had settled in Kenya around the turn of the century.[10] Towns like Eastbourne and Bournemouth not only provided safe parliamentary seats for imperial enthusiasts like the Conservative Henry Page Croft, but also displayed the most interest in the British-Israelite movement within the Anglican Church. The philosophy of British-Israelism, developed by a member of the ICS in the late nineteenth century, claimed "a providential mission" for the Empire, identifying the British as descendants of Israel's lost tribe, and charging them with the unique duty of spreading the ideals of Christian (Western) civilization. Page Croft, the Conservative MP from Bournemouth, was a fervent believer, once declaring that "[t]he British Empire, entrusted with more than a quarter of the earth's surface, was the central pillar of Christ's Church."[11] Adherents of British-Israelism held hundreds of meetings in the southern counties during the interwar years.[12] These areas of Imperial Conservatism assumed an even greater role within the party after its defeat in the 1929 General Election. After huge Tory losses in the North, the Midlands and many urban constituencies, those who represented the southern counties made up nearly 50 per cent of the Conservative Parliamentary Party.[13] Not all these MPs were ardent right-wingers like Page Croft; nevertheless more than enough were so inclined to ensure that the Die Hard MPs, as those on the far right wing of the party were described at the time, and their constituents, exercised a significant, if disproportionate, influence in the party immediately after 1929.

If active and retired gentlemanly imperialists in the South of England continued to regard the Empire well, so did those "gentlemanly capitalists" who clustered around London in the Home Counties, another Tory stronghold.[14] If not specifically India-centered, this was nevertheless a region with all sorts of

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9 Stuart Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party: The Crisis of 1929–1932* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 18–25; For the most complete review of the creation of these Anglo-Indian enclaves, see Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 209–239. The Kipling quote is from David Gilmour, *The Ruling Caste: Imperial Lives in the Victorian Raj* (New York, 2005), p. 232.

10 Dane Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settler Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890–1939* (Durham, 1987), pp. 42–47.

11 *Guardian*, 16 February 1934.

12 This description owes much to Gerald Studdert-Kennedy, "The Christian Imperialism of the Die-Hard Defenders of the Raj," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 18/3 (1990), pp. 342–362.

13 Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 18. Ball puts the number of Die Hards within this group at between 45 and 50 MPs.

14 Included in this region was not only the London metropolitan area, but Kent, Essex, Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Surrey, Middlesex and Berkshire.

interests in the empire at large.[15] There was an increasingly overt "interpenetration" between the City and the party in the interwar years, while P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins have rightly identified the Conservative inclination of the "service-consumer industry of the south-east of England."[16] And it indeed seems possible to admit that not only the bankers of the City of London, the inhabitants of the "stockbroker belt," but their legions of employees, the Pooterish clerks of the inner suburbs, all had good cause for interest in the Empire, without making the larger claim that these contributors to the service economy were solely responsible for the very existence of the Empire in the first place. Those in finance capital had a compelling stake in the continuation of the imperial system: in the last part of the 1920s imperial investment had accounted for 59 per cent of all foreign investment.[17] Although the Indian Secretary, Samuel Hoare, claimed that there was "not a shred of foundation" for the belief that the City influenced Indian financial policy, the truth was that without governmental guarantees of continued British supervision in the Indian Treasury, "the City would not lend it money."[18] Furthermore, by the end of that decade the City had come to support the idea of imperial economic unity and a system of preferences, not only because this would ensure Dominion exports, and thus allow them to pay their debts, but also because a closed imperial system would maintain the place of sterling as an international currency, and the position of London as a center of international finance.[19] The shipping industry, another major component of the London-based service sector, was also in a slump by the mid-1920s, and a closer concentration on inter-imperial trade might have increased revenues, and also revived insurance

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15 In the first place, this area seemed to produce a remarkable number of recruits to the Colonial, though not the Indian, Civil Service in the interwar years. See M.W. Daly, *Empire on the Nile: The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan 1898–1934* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 82–93, 349–360. The Indian Civil Service, for reasons related both to pay and to concerns over nationalism, was conversely only able to recruit about four hundred "Europeans" between 1915 and 1935: see D.C. Potter, *India's Political Administrators, 1919–1983* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 84–91.

16 Keith Middlemas, "The Party, Industry and the City" in Anthony Seldon and Stuart Ball, eds *Conservative Century: The Conservative Party since 1900* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 445–497, esp. 450–451; P.J. Cain and A.G. Hopkins, *British Imperialism: Volume II: Crisis and Deconstruction, 1914–1990* (London, 1993), pp. 29–30.

17 Bernard Porter, *The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism, 1850–1983* (London, 1984), p. 267. For a discussion of the role such foreign investment played in the debate over adopting a Keynesian solution to Britain's economic woes, see Peter Clarke, *The Keynesian Revolution in the Making 1924–1936* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 75–102.

18 Hoare to Willingdon, 5 February 1932, Templewood India Office Papers, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/161–173; R.A. Butler to Herbert Reed, 1 February 1933, Trinity College Butler Papers, RAB F3/4/33.

19 This discussion is largely based on Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism II*, pp. 72–73, 144–145.

interests allied with shipping.[20] Given the cumulative importance the City and these other interests had in the economics of the region as a whole, many voters in the South-east would thus have found it hard to be indifferent to the fortunes of the Empire, especially as the "imperial message pervaded everyday life."[21] Outside certain Labour strongholds in the metropolis, this population voted overwhelmingly for the Conservative party, and, as one observer has noticed, celebrated Empire Day with more vigor than any other part of Britain.[22]

Lancashire constituted a third prominent, if occasionally unstable, location of Tory support. This urbanized, heavily industrial area had proved to be the most reliable source of Conservatism north of the Midlands, though. The Conservatives, as beneficiaries of the "Orange card," had received substantial support from the urban working class by turning hostility towards Irish Catholic immigrants, especially in Liverpool, into votes against the seemingly pro-Irish Liberal party in the late nineteenth century.[23] Although some of these voters gravitated back to the Liberals at the turn of the century, the Tories made gains in another significant area of Liberal support. By 1910 Lancashire businessmen and the middle classes generally had committed themselves to the Tories, since their long-standing allegiance to the Liberal coda of Free Trade (as opposed to the rising Tory preference for protectionism) had been displaced by their concerns over the new "progressivism" fostered by the Liberal-Labour alliance in Lancashire in the early 1900s.[24] The rise of Labour after the war, and the fracture of the Liberal party provided only further impetus for the rush of the commercial classes to the Conservative party, while some working-class areas, where the goods for trade were produced, remained true to a much older Tory allegiance. In Lancashire there was really only one trade: cotton.

In Lancashire, the *Manchester Guardian* prominently displayed the daily closings of the world's cotton exchanges. Just before the outbreak of the First World War, Lancashire's cotton textiles had been the U.K.'s largest export, providing a quarter of the British total.[25] In 1912 the industry employed more than three-

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[20] *Ibid.*, 40–41; see also Andrew Thompson, *The Empire Strikes Back?: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (London, 2005), pp. 33–34.

[21] Jonathan Schneer, *London 1900: The Imperial Metropolis* (New Haven, 1999), 13.

[22] J.A. Mangan, *"Benefits bestowed?": Education and British Imperialism* (Manchester, 1988), pp. 50–52.

[23] On the rise of working-class Toryism in Lancashire, see Richard Shannon, *The Age of Disraeli, 1868–1881: The Rise of Tory Democracy* (London, 1992), pp. 59–70; also P.J. Waller, *Democracy and Sectarianism: A political and social history of Liverpool 1868–1939* (Liverpool, 1981), pp. 20–40.

[24] See Peter Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism* (Cambridge, 1971), p. 309.

[25] Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism II*, p. 33.

quarters of a million people. India took nearly half of Lancashire's exports.[26] As Basudev Chatterji puts it, it is no wonder that the largely Tory Lancashire saw India as their and "imperial Britain's most prized possession."[27] Even in the years leading up to the Great War, however, there were signs of trouble ahead for Lancashire textiles. The industry was overly dependent on emerging markets in countries which exported mainly primary products, India being the best example. Furthermore the technology and organization of the Lancashire mills had remained static since the nineteenth century, with little vertical integration and higher production costs.[28] Keynes later criticized the cotton-men's reluctance to modernize, sarcastically referring to them as "our Lancashire lads, England's pride for shrewdness."[29]

The years that followed the war were, literally, "decades of almost unmitigated disaster."[30] During the war, import-substitution had carved away at the Indian market, with the rise of the Bombay textile mills. The rupee fluctuated in value in the years immediately following the war, restricting Indian purchasing power. Threats came not only from the influx of cheap Japanese goods, but also from the economic boycotts which arose out of Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign after 1921.[31] The most disturbing development, though, was the implementation of the Indian Fiscal Autonomy Convention as part of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms of 1919. Designed both to meet the fiscal needs of the Indian Government and to appease supposedly loyal Indian businessmen, this measure led to increased duties on Lancashire goods.[32] Although the Lancashire cotton-men lobbied for preferences with some success in the mid-1920s, the realization that customs decisions now lay more with Delhi than with London was hardly reassuring.[33] Despite these factors, though, the cotton industry managed to survive the first half of the 1920s. A domestic consumer boom and a general rise in international demand both helped.[34] In politics, the Conservative cause in Lancashire suffered

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26 Alan J. Kidd, *Manchester* (Keele, 1993), p. 184.

27 Basudev Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire: Lancashire and British Policy in India, 1919–1939* (Delhi, 1992).

28 Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 37–186.

29 Quoted in John Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap: The Cotton Industry 1945–1970* (Oxford, 1991), p. 14. The collapse of Lancashire industry has, inversely, spawned a historiographical industry to explain it: examples are those works of Chatterji, Cain and Hopkins and Singleton cited above, as well as, Lars G. Sandberg, *Lancashire in Decline* (Columbus, Ohio, 1974).

30 Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap*, p. 11.

31 Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 124–222.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 203.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 189–305.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 147. See also the tables in Robert Robson, *The Cotton Industry in Britain* (London, 1957), pp. 332–335.

somewhat in the General Election of 1923, the victim of the last gasp of a Lancashire Liberalism briefly revived by Baldwin's stab at tariff reform. In 1924, on the other hand, the Tories swept the county from discredited Labour and the Liberals, taking a full two-thirds of the seats.

By 1929, however, the fortunes of Lancashire had plummeted. The international slump in primary products harshly exposed the shortcomings of the poorly organized, inefficient and over-concentrated textile industry.[35] After 1926 unemployment in the industry was always greater than 10 per cent; in 1931, at the worst, unemployment ran at over 43 per cent. In 1930 only 58 per cent of available spindles were in use. Towns like Oldham, Blackburn and Darwen, which produced the cheaper coarse goods, were the worst-off, but the slump contributed as well to the decline of the Liverpool and Birkenhead ports, already harmed by the rise of Southampton as the premier transatlantic passenger port, and coal mining areas like Wigan and St. Helen's.[36] The long-term effects of the slump were also shattering: between the start of the Great War and the late 1930s employment was nearly halved, exports dropped 80 per cent, and total output fell 45 per cent.[37] Baldwin's uninspiring campaign of "Safety First," which in contrast to both the Labour and Liberal manifestoes offered no concrete plan to alleviate growing economic dislocation throughout Britain and declared that change would make things even worse, seems to have ensured the Tory losses in Lancashire in the General Election of 1929. Yet although the Conservatives lost half their seats, they still retained a solid base of twenty seats in the county, certainly their only source of urban support in Northern England.[38] The continuing attraction of Lancashire to the Tories emerged dramatically in the election of 1931, as both suburban and working-class constituencies flocked back to the party. Only two of the seats lost to Labour in 1929 were not regained in 1931, with Tories resurgent in hugely depressed areas like Blackburn and Oldham, and in working-class districts like Manchester Hulme.[39] Thus, despite some evidence of electoral instability, it appears that Lancashire was a vital area of Tory support, indeed its only true northern source of votes. The party could not ignore that crucial, and symbolically important, fact, nor the presence there of twenty consistently Conservative seats, which had remained Tory from 1924 through 1931, and of 18 to 20 more marginal constituencies, which had gone with the party in 1924 and 1931, but deserted it in

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35 Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 145–150, 163–164.

36 These figures come from Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap*, pp. 11–16 and John K. Walton, *Lancashire: A Social History, 1558–1939* (Manchester, 1987), pp. 329–337.

37 Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap*, p. 11.

38 Walton's verdict is that the Tories held their strongholds of "Liverpool, Manchester suburbs, the seaside resorts and (for inscrutable reasons which require investigation) Bury." Walton, *Lancashire*, p. 349.

39 Kidd, *Manchester*, p. 204.

1929.[40] It was plain, therefore, that the Conservative Party had enjoyed some success in this region which had a compelling and continued interest in India, an interest which had grown even stronger by 1929, as the economy slumped and the Indian government considered higher customs duties in order to halt India's own financial slide. Sir George Schuster, the Indian Finance Member on the Viceroy's Council in 1929, saw a coming clash between Lancashire and India: "It will be pressed against us. to test our sincerity in considering India before Lancashire. with greater keenness [especially] after the Secretary of State's [Wedgwood Benn's] recent speech that so far as fiscal autonomy was concerned, India had already got Dominion Status."[41]

The Image of India

Discussions, within the Conservative Party and in India, about how best to confront Gandhi and the Congress took place within an environment where there existed already a widely-disseminated and fairly comprehensive set of beliefs about India and Indians. During the period of British rule in India, notably in the late nineteenth century, there had emerged several strong ideas about what "India" was and what the British role there should be. India, or at least the idea of it, had become a cultural construct, a place of which the British claimed specific ethnographic understandings. These British assumptions about India were quite powerful and pervasive, so much so that they proved influential in shaping the British response to Indian nationalism. What would prove difficult for these Conservatives was not disunity over what India was, but rather contention over what this vision of India meant for policy-making there. These ideas about India insinuated themselves into British sensibilities in several ways, and a great part of the Conservative leadership and membership, if not intentionally, found itself quite well-placed to encounter these views.

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40 Stuart Ball, "The National and Regional Party Structure" in Seldon and Ball, eds, *Conservative Century*, p. 208. I have selected Lancashire as my choice for the third vital area of Conservative support because of its unique achievement of remaining Tory in the north. An alternative area of vital electoral support I might have chosen would be the Midlands, which had inherited the legacy of Liberal Unionism and popular Conservatism from Joseph Chamberlain. I believe that Lancashire was more important within the party though, not only because it stood alone in the north, but because it also preserved the only real connection between the party and traditional industry, not the newer industries of the interwar years which dominated the Midlands. Losing Lancashire rather than the Midlands would have been a more severe blow, eliminating the Conservatives' ability to represent themselves as a national party which was above the divisions of class. Of course, the Tories lost Lancashire immediately after the war, and for good. For a discussion of this regionalism, see J.P. Dunbabin, "British elections in the nineteenth and twentieth century, a regional approach," *English Historical Review* CCCLXXV (April, 1980), pp. 241–267.

41 Quoted in Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, p. 305.

A significant vehicle for the promotion of certain ideas about India was the print media.[42] Chandrika Kaul has demonstrated that metropolitan newspapers were not only the "chief source" of information about India, but, as such, "provided much of the material from which political opinion was formed."[43] Images of India permeated a popular consumer culture which included everything from biscuit-box depictions of Indian scenes and early films through the strictures of the British Boy Scout movement.[44] Londoners saw representations of the "real" India, living dioramas of village life, at the Imperial Exhibition at Wembley in 1924.[45] India was also the subject of much popular literature, especially in the adventure stories and romance novels which attracted a large middle-class audience, and in the travelogues, memoirs, and works of pseudo-anthropology which claimed a readership among the political elite. Some notable examples of these were the stories of Rudyard Kipling (Stanley Baldwin's cousin, no less), tales which found many imitators in the profusion of "Boys' Own" literature which cloaked professions of British manly character in accounts of exploration and colonial derring-do. Maud Diver, the wife of a former British officer in India, churned out popular romances at a Barbara Cartland-like pace through the interwar years, using India as both a character and an exotic backdrop in her novels. Flora Annie Steel authored several historical novels of India, especially a best-selling account of the 1857 Mutiny.[46] And there were plenty of memoirs and accounts of India available, including those by Katherine Mayo, as well as by former British administrators there like H.H. Risley, Michael O'Dwyer, Robert Baden-Powell and Walter Lawrence, to name just a few.[47] India, and particular depictions of it, also permeated political discussions in the early twentieth century, most notably in the case of the women's suffrage movement. For example, British suffragettes used descriptions of the condition of Indian women as an argument

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42 For recent work on this, see Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c. 1880–1922* (Manchester, 2003); Tim Pratt and James Vernon, "Appeal from this fiery bed … The Colonial Politics of Gandhi's Fasts and Their Metropolitan Reception," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (January 2005), pp. 92–114.

43 Chandrika Kaul, "A New Angle of Vision: The London Press, Governmental Information Management and the Indian Empire, 1900–22," *Contemporary Record* 8/2 (1994), p. 213.

44 Anandi Ramamurthy, *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Manchester, 2003), pp. 105–106, 119.

45 John MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The manipulation of British public opinion 1880–1960* (Manchester, 1984), Chapters 1–4.

46 For Diver and Steel, see Benita Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries: India in the British Imagination, 1880–1930* (London, 2nd edn, 1998), pp. 78–126.

47 Mayo's *Mother India* both shaped, and was shaped by British interests in India. For the full story of the influences behind this text, see Mrinalini Sinha, *Specters of Mother India: The Global Restructuring of an Empire* (Durham, 2006), Chapter 2.

for suffrage, claiming that imperial administration might become more moral if British women could exercise their influence on it.[48]

For those actively involved at the highest levels of British politics and colonial administration, there were other sources of information about India as well, both personal and literary. Political elites in Britain were members of both a privileged and homogeneous group in many ways, and this was particularly true within the Conservative Party. Many high-ranking Tories shared a common educational background that included attendance at one of the major public schools and then Oxbridge. This meant that they had enjoyed a prolonged exposure to a late nineteenth century curriculum, both at school and university, which expounded on the glory of Empire and the British duty to maintain it and which had a mission of explicitly preparing young men to do just that. Many in the Conservative leadership were acquainted with not just the stereotypical images of India which pervaded a public school education, but also with many academic treatises on India and its place within the larger Empire. Both Stanley Baldwin and Samuel Hoare, the future Indian Secretary, read history at university, in Cambridge and Oxford respectively. Baldwin, according to his biographer, drew much of his understanding of Empire from his undergraduate experience with the work of several prominent imperial theorists: William Stubbs, Henry Maine and J.R. Seeley.[49] Hoare undertook a similar course of study in the Oxford History School, and had significant contact with the proponents of imperial federation and theory at All Souls' in Oxford as well.[50]

However, public school and Oxbridge graduates dominated not only Conservative politics, but also the civil service in Whitehall, India and elsewhere throughout the dependent Empire. The Tory leaders, therefore, had a strong acquaintance with those who ran the Indian administration, both there and in London, increasing the access of these political elites to information about India. Having shared a similar education to men like Baldwin and Hoare, those who administered British India tended to have at least somewhat similar views on the Raj, its inhabitants, and its purpose. The public school and Oxbridge experience thus not only tied together Conservative politicians and Indian experts and administrators, but also ensured that these men would share a uniform impression of Empire and India. It was a closed, and self-reinforcing, circle within which certain ideas about the relationship between Britain and India persisted. Within this circle, there emerged important, and at times self-proclaimed, experts whose

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48 Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women, and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill, 1994); also Barbara Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865–1945," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13/4 (1990), pp. 309–321.

49 Philip Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin: Conservative Leadership and National Values* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 255–261.

50 J.A. Cross, *Sir Samuel Hoare: A Political Biography* (London, 1977).

views would circulate among policy-makers and politicians. Most Conservatives were certainly familiar with Lord Curzon's views on India, and much else besides, through this indefatigable peer's pronouncements and publications during and after his Indian Viceroyalty in the early twentieth century. Lionel Curtis's enthusiasm for imperial federation also permeated political discussions through the significant All Souls' contingent which held positions in both the Liberal and Conservative ranks. Most significantly, some members of the ICS gained regard in administrative and political circles as well, as in the case of Malcolm Darling, who published widely on the Punjabi peasantry, and especially in the case of Malcolm Hailey. Hailey, a close friend to many prominent Conservatives, had served in India from the turn of the century and eventually governed two provinces (Punjab, Central Provinces and the United Provinces). In the 1930s, as he occupied the last of these governorships, he also emerged as a key adviser to those Tories charged with constructing the British response to Gandhi and the nationalists.

Religious institutions also served to present many in Britain, especially Conservatives, with certain ideas about India, the British role there, and the providential nature of the Empire as a whole. Accounts of the rise of the Empire, especially those promoted in the ancient universities, saw British success as proof of some divine sanction and approval; the history of imperialism itself was thus imbued with deep theological meaning and purpose.[51] This idea of Empire, and rule in India particularly, as Britain's sacred duty was preached not just in lecture halls, but from the pulpits of the Anglican church, and not just in those parishes where British-Israelism held sway, but in the Broad Church as well, where there gathered several men who would have a huge influence on the future of British India, including the Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1930s, Cosmo Gordon Lang, and the Tory politicians, Stanley Baldwin, Samuel Hoare and Edward Wood (Lord Irwin), devout Anglicans all. Besides the Church, the other main source of religious opinion on Empire and India were the missionary societies who formed a persistent lobby in Westminster and often gained public attention through their denunciations of various indigenous Indian practices.[52]

The images of India that entered British consciousness through these various outlets shared some fundamental similarities in their presentation of Indian life, religion and political society. It was a discourse that emphasized the idea

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51 Reba Soffer, *Discipline and Power: The University, History and the Making of an English Elite, 1870–1930* (Stanford, 1994).

52 For a balanced discussion of the various ways in which missionaries presented Indians and others to a metropolitan audience, see Andrew Porter, "Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm, and Empire," in Porter, ed., *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Volume III: The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 222–246; see also J.G. Greenlee and C.M. Johnston, *Good Citizens: British Missionaries and Imperial States, 1870–1918* (Montreal and Kingston, 1999), Chapter 2.

of "difference": not only the difference between Britain and India, but also the various differences or oppositions which existed in India itself.[53]

Pronouncements about the dichotomy between Britain and India, between East and West, as Kipling and many others put it, tended naturally towards generalization. A recurrent trope of this discourse was the difference between Western modernity and an India still plagued by "ancient" belief systems and social constructions. In short, India appeared an "authentically primitive" place.[54] The basic notion underlying many British assumptions was that the vast majority of India's inhabitants lived in small agricultural villages; this was the "real" India, rural, placid and apolitical.[55] In 1893, contemplating limited political reforms in India, Lord Lansdowne had argued that "any system of election is entirely foreign to the feelings and habits of the people, and that … the really representative men would probably not come forward under it."[56] The *Imperial Gazetteer* of 1909 estimated that ninety per cent of Indians lived in communities with populations less than five thousand, and reckoned that nearly all those born in these villages remained there their entire lives.[57] These communities remained largely isolated from the modern world and its concerns, with most Indians concerned only with matters of "family, clan or village."[58] British administrators made something of a fetish of these rural communities. Lord Curzon saw the "real Indian people" among "the Indian poor, the Indian peasant, the patient, humble, silent millions." They had "no politics," but were the "bone and sinew of the country."[59] This understanding of India found many exponents, including Richard Temple, H.H. Risley and Katherine Mayo, who praised rural villages as the "true homes of India," inhabited by nine-tenths of the population: "hard-working cultivators of the soil,

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53 The best overview of these complementary understandings of difference is Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*.

54 Joselyn Zivin, "The Imagined Reign of the Iron Lecturer: Village Broadcasting in Colonial India," *Modern Asian Studies* 32/3 (1998), pp. 717–738.

55 There has been some excellent work on this premise which underpinned the British understanding of India, and my work is heavily indebted to it. My account here draws upon the following: Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, pp. 35–77; Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 69–72; Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity: 1880–1930* (London, 2000), pp. 82–115.

56 Lansdowne's remarks excerpted in *The Indian Nationalist Movement, 1885–1947: Selected Documents*, B.N. Pandey, ed. (New York, 1979), p. 30.

57 *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Oxford, 1909), Volume I, pp. 433–467.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 433; H.H. Risley, *The People of India* (originally published 1915; reprinted Delhi, 1969), pp. 299–300.

59 Curzon speech from 1905, quoted in Derek Blakeley, "India in the Debate over Empire," unpublished paper presented at 1996 Annual Meeting of the American Historical Association, Atlanta, Georgia. I thank Dr. Blakeley for this and other references to Curzon's Indian views. See also Nayana Goradia, *Lord Curzon: The Last of the British Moghuls* (Delhi, 1993), p. 177.

simple, illiterate, peaceful, kindly."[60] In these visions, Indian villagers enjoyed an almost "Edenic" existence, primitive and childlike.[61] Indian villages were portrayed as examples of an "ancient" society, one in which change came slowly, if it came at all.[62] Indeed, Henry Maine's influential work on village life presented these small Indian communities as equivalent to those found in the early days of English civilization.[63] These portrayals placed great emphasis on the apolitical nature of rural Indians. Both Mayo and Risley declared that the closest thing to true Indian politics existed only in "the village community and the village council."[64] One traveler concluded that nationalist sentiment would find little purchase in this "real" India where the "masses still dream on in the villages."[65] Katherine Mayo aside, the interwar years also saw significant publications on this theme by Indian civil servants themselves, most notably Malcolm Darling and Frank Lugard Brayne.[66] Malcolm Darling found Punjabis, among all rural Indians, to be "the very marrow and soul of the peasantry," men who had "[g]rit, skill in farming and a fine physique."[67] The common understanding of the "real" India, then, envisioned a panoply of rural villages, parochial and self-contained, where life centered on the rise and fall of the agricultural calendar, and the peasantry remained blessedly ignorant of the Western modernity which had affected urban India with such unnatural results. There was even confirmation of this belief from an unlikely source, Gandhi, who had based much of his early writing on India, especially "Hind Swaraj," on the argument that inherently corrupt Westernization and modernization was ruining the ancient and morally sound India of small agricultural villages.[68]

However, for all the praise of this peasantry's simplicity and community, British descriptions remained largely paternalistic as well. For though these rural

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60 Katherine Mayo, *Mother India* (New York, 1927), p. 66; Richard Temple, *Men and Events of My Time in India* (originally published 1882; reprinted Delhi, 1985), pp. 504–505. See also: C. Sandford, *India: Land of Regrets* (London, 1934), pp. 121–122, 190, 236.

61 Dane Kennedy offers insights into the British belief in "Edenic" rural peoples in the Indian hills in his *The Magic Mountains*.

62 For example, see Edmund Candler's description in his "Kashi," excerpted in E. Boehmer, ed., *Empire Writing: An Anthology of Colonial Literature 1870–1918* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 339–344.

63 Metcalfe, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 68–72, 91; Stanley Baldwin became acquainted with Maine's work while an undergraduate: see Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 255.

64 Risley, *The People of India*, pp. 299–300; Mayo, *Mother India*, p. 296.

65 Barbara Wingfield-Stratford, *India and the English* (London, 1922), p. 97.

66 Frank Lugard Brayne, *The Remaking of Village India* (Oxford, 1929); Malcolm Darling, *Wisdom and Waste in the Punjab Village* (Oxford, 1934). For more on Brayne, see Zivin, "Imagined reign of the Iron Lecturer," and for more on Darling, see Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: The Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London, 1993).

67 Malcolm Darling, *The Punjab Peasant in Prosperity and Debt* (London, 1925), p. 38.

68 M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj or Indian Home Rule* (Ahmedabad, 1996), pp. 54–57.

villages might resemble those of early England, they had obviously not evolved while the latter emphatically had. Something had retarded such progress in India, leaving the subcontinent's inhabitants in a state of permanent adolescence. Curzon considered Indians "less than school children,' and other commentaries on India echoed that description, lamenting elements of childishness they saw in Indian behavior.[69] Though inclined towards placidity or contentment, rural India was still prone to the irrationality, violence and excitability which, in the British understanding, plagued the "Eastern" races. Hinduism epitomized this continued Indian backwardness. The pervasive British understanding of Hindu India contained some basic, if at times contradictory, assumptions. The religion was synonymous with weakness, both physical and moral, but was also regarded as ancient – traditional and even hidebound – and therefore a metonym for Indian society as a whole. Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, a must-read for many in British colonial circles in the 1920s – and elsewhere: it had twenty printings between 1928 and 1930 – had reinforced several stereotypes about Hinduism, most particularly the notion that it was effeminate, governed by unrestrained sexual desire and led by "broken-nerved, low-spirited, petulant ancients" whose followers were inevitably "narrow-chested, near-sighted [and] anemic."[70] Hindus were "small weak and timid," according to an official source in 1909.[71] Ancient religious practices, like the worship of Kali, appeared in the work of writers like Steel and Mayo as occasions of fanaticism, cruelty and carnality. This sense of India's arrested development emerged especially in accounts of Indian sexual activity which argued that, presumably unlike the self-controlled European man, Indian males had not yet reached the level of maturity required to control male desire. Deep down, passion and an unbridled sexuality still possessed Indians, a notion which was central to Mayo's explanation for much that was wrong on the sub-continent and thus for why Indians could not be allowed to govern themselves, obsessed as they were by such things as child marriage. Mayo argued that Indian men enjoyed such sexual license and lustful behavior when young that, by age thirty, these men were completely run-down and "broken-nerved," their mental and physical energy sapped by lives devoted to sensual pleasure; such men could never, in Mayo's estimation, govern themselves.[72] Moreover, by virtue of the caste system, Hindus remained enmeshed in a pre-modern social

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[69] Katherine Castle, "The imperial Indian: India in British history textbooks for schools, 1890–1914" in *The Imperial curriculum: racial images and education in the British colonial experience*, ed. J.A. Mangan (London, 1993) p. 36.

[70] Mayo, *Mother India*, p. 3; for concise summaries of this view of Hinduism, see Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, pp. 92–112.

[71] *Imperial Gazetteer*, I, p. 447.

[72] Mayo, *Mother India*, p. 32. See also the Editor's Introduction in Mrinalini Sinha, ed., *Selections from "Mother India"* (New Delhi, 1998).

structure built on hierarchy and ties of kinship.[73] Even a supporter of Indian causes like Edward Thompson (father of the historian, E.P. Thompson) admitted that caste had left India mired in "Hindu social injustice."[74] The retired Indian administrator Rushbrook Williams summarized this view in 1938, arguing that: "to many Hindus the duty owed to other members of the joint family appears something far stronger than any duty owed to the State; what Westerners call nepotism is in India a positive virtue."[75] This immorality and lack of self-discipline also manifested itself, to British eyes, in Indians' apparently innate aversion to honesty and preference for what Curzon called "craftiness and diplomatic wile."[76] History textbooks in Britain summarized the condition of Indians as: "imprisoned in the strange religions and customs of a pre-civilized society. their loyalties were volatile, as centuries of exploitation and primeval religious practices had contained them in the grip of childlike emotions and superstitious beliefs."[77] An overarching theme, then, was that of India's immaturity, a condition which manifested itself in sexual license, physical and mental weakness, a penchant for graft and an aversion to honesty and plain-speaking.[78] These images of India, encountered, for example, by Stanley Baldwin while an undergraduate, would exert a significant influence on the British response to the rise of Indian nationalism in the early twentieth century.[79] Moreover, this particular sense of Indian and British difference was not the only framework Britons employed to understand India, for it potently combined with another British colonial conviction, that of the numerous differences which divided India itself. Indeed, this latter sensibility may have been of even greater importance in shaping the Raj's response to its Indian challengers.

The author Flora Annie Steel, in her chronicles of the life of the Anglo-Indian memsahibs, had described India as "that vast category of races, creeds, customs."[80] The British politician Lord Lothian, who had toured India in the early 1930s, argued that "Indian society … is essentially a congeries of widely separated classes, races and communities with divergencies of interests and hereditary sentiment which

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73 For discussion of the growth of British ideas about caste, see Bernard Cohn, "Notes on the History of the Study of Indian Society and Culture," in Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians*; Nicholas Dirks, *Castes of Mind: Colonialism and the Making of Modern India* (Princeton, 2001), Chapters 3 and 10.

74 Edward Thompson, *The Reconstruction of India* (London, 1930), pp. 262–263.

75 Quoted in Andrew Rotter, *Comrades at Odds: The United States and India, 1947–1964* (Ithaca, 2000), pp. 129–130.

76 Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, p. 60.

77 Castle, "The imperial Indian," p. 37.

78 My discussion here owes much to Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* and Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*. For examples of such descriptions, see Mayo, *Mother India* as well as Patricia Kendall, *Come with me to India!* (New York, 1931).

79 Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 255.

80 Quoted in Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, p. 123.

for ages have precluded common action or local unanimity."[81] If British accounts sometimes presented a seemingly monolithic Hindu India, at many other times colonial assessments stressed how caste demarcations divided and fragmented this same population. This sense that caste was such a fundamental force in India pervaded British governing circles to such a degree that, for example, India Office intelligence reports on indigenous politicians began with a classification of these men's caste status: Malaviya was a "Malwa Brahmin," Nehru a "Kashmiri Brahmin," and even Jinnah was described as "Mussalman (Khoja)."[82] Caste was merely one of several supposed characteristics of Hinduism, moreover, that the British used to distinguish these Indians from those of other faiths, in service of the notion that the subcontinent was permanently and historically divided by religion, and by Hinduism and Islam specifically.[83] The 1934 report of the Parliamentary committee which examined the proposed Indian political reforms concluded that "Hinduism is distinguished by the phenomenon of caste … the religion of Islam on the other hand is based upon the conception of the equality of man."[84] Indian Muslims and Sikhs garnered further respect from British officials who considered the two groups as hardier and more martial specimens, and this conviction recurred even in fictional accounts of life in the Raj.[85] Ronny Heaslop, the embodiment of British officialdom in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, scorns most Indians, but concedes that "[t]he Pathan – he's a man if you like."[86] Hindus, conversely, were "small, weak and timid," according to an official source in 1909.[87] Hindu weakness expressed itself not just physically, but also very much in an Indian penchant for bribery, outlandish rhetoric and double-dealing. A popular study of India from 1934 concluded that: "The Hindu is the talker,

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81 Quoted in Bidyut Chakrabarty, "The Communal Award of 1932 and its Implications in Bengal," *Modern Asian Studies* 23/3 (1989), pp. 493–523.

82 For all three, see profiles in Indian Political Intelligence files: India Office Records [IOR] L/PJ/12/201/2–4, 8–10, 27–29. "Khoja" refers to a particular sect within Shi'ite Islam.

83 There is now an immense literature on this British conception of a communally-divided India, and on the possible impact that such an understanding has had on Indian politics throughout the twentieth century. For the former see: Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj* and Gyanendra Pandey, *The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India* (Delhi, 1990). For the debate on the latter, see among others, the essays by Amartya Sen and Ayesha Jalal in *Nationalism, Democracy & Development: State and Politics in India*, eds Sugata Bose and Ayesha Jalal (Delhi, 1998), and the contributions of Mushirul Hasan and Sumit Sarkar in *Contesting the Nation: Religion, Community and the Politics of Democracy in India*, ed. David Ludden (Philadelphia, 1996).

84 "The Future of India," Joint Select Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform, 1934, Conservative Party Archives (CPA), microform 1934/52.

85 Francis Hutchins, *The Illusion of Permanence: British Imperialism in India* (Princeton, 1967), esp. Chapter 8; Fox, *Lions of the Punjab*, Chapter 8.

86 E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (New York, 1952), p. 39.

87 *Imperial Gazetteer*, I, p. 447.

the Mohammedan the fighter."[88] With such assumptions so firmly embedded in the colonial conscious, it was hardly surprising that British administrators saw Hindus and Muslims as perpetually "warring creeds."[89] These ideas about notable differences between Indian religious groups relied heavily, not only on theological explanations, but also on theories about the impact of environment and geography on the development of divergent populations within India. These conceptions further reinforced the image of India as a land divided.

The "martial races" of northern India, Sikhs from the Punjab and Muslims from the Northwest frontier, came from rugged climates that produced a hardy and forthright peasant stock, while the steamier environment of Bengal sapped its inhabitants of both moral and physical vigor, leaving them enervated and indolent.[90] Moreover, these hardier Indians came from largely rural areas, in essence, from the "real" India. Indian cities like Calcutta, conversely, had produced, in British eyes, a repellent hybrid: the Anglicized Indian or "babu," an Indian, usually Hindu and not one of the "martial" groups, who had acquired a veneer of Western learning, but could never gain the solid moral strength of character of the Englishman. The character of the Bengali "babu," an innately effeminate, cowardly type (again in contrast to the Sikhs and the princes) who possessed rhetorical eloquence, but no conception of the meaning of his words, and whose aggressive pronouncements masked his true spinelessness, became a familiar trope in British portrayals of Indians. This image recurred especially in British descriptions of nationalist politicians, many of whom were Western-educated.[91] This character made appearances in Kipling's stories, in *Punch*, and in romance novels.[92] The "babu," depicted as caught between his pretensions and his inalterable Indian self, was a pitiful figure, one apparently so confused about his own identity that he lived in a perpetual state of irrational excitability. It was hardly a coincidence that the figure of the "babu" became prominent

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88 Sandford, *India: Land of Regrets*, p. 111.

89 The 1920 Hunter Report on the Jallianwallah Bagh massacre in Amritsar, quoted in Derek Sayer, "British Reaction to the Amritsar Massacre, 1919–20," *Past & Present* (1991), pp. 130–164. William Gould has also noted recently that among administrators, "caste and religion were seen to be the really critical and essentially weak nodes of social organization." Gould, *Hindu Nationalism and the Language of Politics in Late Colonial India* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 24.

90 For further discussion of British views of the Indian climate, see Kennedy, *Magic Mountains*, Chapter 2; E.M. Collingham, *Imperial Bodies: The Physical Experience of the Raj, c. 1800–1947* (Cambridge, 2001). Kipling promoted similar ideas in his fiction, especially the short story, "The Head of the District."

91 See especially Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity*, Chapter 1; also: Teresa Hubel, *Whose India? The Independence Struggle in British and Indian Fiction and History* (Durham, 1996), Chapter 1.

92 See Lahiri, *Indians in Britain*, pp. 92–100; Parry, *Delusions and Discoveries*, pp. 142–150; for an example of such a stock character, see F. Astley, *Baboo Hurry Bungsho Jabberjee, B.A.* (New York, 1897).

in British imperial culture at the turn of the twentieth century, a period which saw the rise of Congress nationalism in India. Whereas British commentators praised the peasants and princes who accepted their role in the hierarchy of the Raj, they castigated those Indians who wished to rise above their pre-ordained station. Descriptions of the early Indian nationalism saw the "babu" as metonym for the entire movement. One British newspaper saw the founders of the Congress as "vapouring, gushing rhetoricians. busy-bodies, notoriety-seekers and incendiaries."[93] Sir Michael O'Dwyer, a former official in the Punjab, painted urban Indian males as cowards who had shunned military service during the First World War. Curzon lamented that late nineteenth-century reforms had turned the Calcutta Corporation over to the "Baboo Party." Katherine Mayo reinforced this perception in the late 1920s in her description of Indian politicians as "[a]depts in the phraseology of democratic representation [but] profoundly innocent of the thought behind the phrase."[94] In all, Indian nationalists appeared as unrepresentative, an "educated minority" high on rhetoric, but short on physical courage and moral character.

Not all Indians who embraced Western ideas, or at least the outward trappings of Britishness, met with scorn though. The rulers of the Indian princely states occupied yet another distinct space in the British vision of India, as exemplars of an ancient Indian hierarchy, but also natural supporters of the Raj, having been inculcated in the late nineteenth century with an appreciation of aristocratic and gentlemanly pursuits like hunting, polo and cricket.[95] The relationship between the British and the princes was a self-serving one on both sides, with the princes helping to prop up the Raj and the British enabling the perpetuation of regional or local princely power. Depictions of the princes served to reinforce the notion that these nobles were Britain's natural ally, Temple calling them "at heart among the best friends we possess."[96] Samuel Hoare, visiting India as Air Secretary, found the ruler of Jodhpur "young and progressive," and had similar praise for the Maharajah of Bikaner, who had a "long record of wise administration and [an] equally long row of service medals."[97] British affection for the princes, and the ties between these two groups, only grew as, on the recommendation of colonial advisors and English tutors, many young men from noble families traveled to Britain for "gentlemanly" education in the public schools and ancient

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93 Quoted in Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of the Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), p. 65.

94 Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It* (London, 1925), p. 227; Mayo, *Mother India*, p. 3.

95 Patrick McDevitt, *"May the Best Man Win:" Sport, Masculinity and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880–1935* (London, 2004), pp. 37–57; David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford, 2001), pp. 45–57.

96 Temple, *Men and Events*, p. 505.

97 Samuel Hoare, *India by Air* (London, 1927), pp. 72, 99–100.

universities. These young princes assumed much of the trappings of the English landed aristocracy, returning to India proficient in hunting, riding polo ponies, and in the famous case of Ranjit Sinhji, making heroic stands on county cricket grounds. Like the Punjabis, nevertheless, the princes were unable to attain a status equal to that of European aristocrats, or even non-titled Westerners. Gentlemanly pursuits and a public school education could only go so far; these princes remained, to the British, products of the "East" at their core, innately prone at times to dishonesty, corruption and misrule, what Curzon termed the behavior of "undisciplined schoolboys."[98]

This, then, was the image of India encountered and absorbed by those charged with meeting the challenge of a rising Indian nationalism in the years after the First World War. It was a picture of India that stressed the overarching importance of difference and diversity: the gulf between a rational West and a superstitious, sentimental and parochial East, as well as the vertical and horizontal cross-hatchings that divided Indian society against itself. This discursive understanding, combined with a particular and selective reading of Indian events, served to shape and fashion the response of British policy-makers who sought to derail any Indian attempt to undermine the Raj. This was, perhaps, the supreme test of British pretensions to know and understand Indians even better than Indians understood themselves. Would colonial knowledge save colonial rule?

Culture and Colonial Intelligence

Imperial information about India came through several channels and from multiple sources. As we have already seen, many Britons, especially in elite circles, encountered images of India and descriptions of Indian behavior in both popular and academic discourse, as well as within certain social and cultural environments. What remains to be determined is the precise nature of the interplay among these ideas, policy-making and the colonial response to the rise of the nationalist movement. How prevalent were these ideas? Were these assumptions about India so strong in and of themselves as to overpower any other possible interpretations of Indian actions, or was their influence ultimately dictated by the intelligence-gathering abilities, or inabilities, of the colonial state?

Among those who served the Raj in India, certain beliefs about indigenous society did seem likely to exist. The bulk of this civil service came from professional families and elite educational backgrounds, with more than a few representing families that had served in India in some capacity for several generations.[99] Their

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98 Goradia, *Lord Curzon*, pp. 154–156.

99 See Buettner, *Empire Families*, pp. 180–187. For more on these family ties, and on the sentiment that the peasant was the true Indian, see the collected interviews at Louisiana

educations, formal and informal, had certainly exposed these administrators to the prevailing understandings of India: its backwardness, the identification of the peasant as the truly Indian type, and the idea of an India divided many ways against itself.[100] Furthermore, service in India did still attract those who saw empire and the "uplift" of the natives, as a Christian duty.[101] Furnished with such notions, and often placed hurriedly into unfamiliar territory, many in the ICS, unsurprisingly, appeared to frame their approach, in rural districts especially, along the lines of this received wisdom. Instead of grasping the inroads made by Congress in the 1920s and 1930s, they remained wedded to the conviction that Indian politics were only parochial, the concern really of the rural landowners more than of the placid peasantry who, without any "outside stimulus" cared "little or nothing about politics."[102]

These ideas seem to have been especially prevalent among those serving in the ICS between the wars; they likely permeated other parts of the Indian administration, particularly the higher ranks of the Indian Police Service, as evidence adduced below should demonstrate. Brayne and Darling were well-known exponents of such a paternalistic view of the Indian peasantry and the image they helped to create, of the Punjab peasant in particular, resonated. In 1928, for example, more ICS newcomers requested a posting to the Punjab than to any other region.[103] Even if they did not gravitate to the Punjab, ICS administrators throughout rural India in these years consistently concluded that the peasantry remained apolitical and oblivious to the inducements of the nationalists.[104] As Shahid Amin has revealed, the ICS judges who presided over the trials and appeals of the defendants in the 1922 Chauri Chaura attack, where more than twenty Indian policemen died after a crowd set their station alight, refused to see the Indians' actions as at all tied to politics and to Gandhi in particular. Instead, the defendants were "deluded peasants" who saw Gandhi

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State University Library's exhibit: "British Voices from South Asia." (www.lib.lsu.edu/special/exhibits/india/intro.htm)

100 See Malcolm Hailey's recollections of his own education in John W. Cell, *Hailey: A Study in British Imperialism, 1872–1969* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1–9. Potter notes that over sixty percent of the ICS serving between the world wars had attended both an English public school and Oxford or Cambridge (Potter, *India's Political Administrators*, pp. 68–71).

101 C.A. Bayly, "Returning the British to South Asian History: The Limits of Colonial Hegemony," in Bayly, *Origins of Nationalism in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi, 1998), pp. 284–285. Andrew Parke Hume (ICS 1927–1947) was one example of this (see Hume Collection at India Office, Mss. Eur.d.724/19).

102 O'Malley, *Indian Civil Service*, p. 154; Potter, *India's Political Administrators*, pp. 42–43; Simon Epstein, "District Officers in Decline: The Erosion of British Authority in the Bombay Countryside, 1919–1947," *Modern Asian Studies* 16/3 (1982), pp. 493–518, esp. 502.

103 Anthony Kirk-Greene, *Britain's Imperial Administrators, 1858–1966* (London, 2000), pp. 104–105; Gilmour, *Ruling Caste*, p. 57.

104 See the district reports quoted in Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 108–111.

as a "miracle worker;" such a vision meant the colonial state saw the event as "a common blur of rustic excesses fuelled by local political machinations."[105] Reginald Maxwell of the ICS sensed in 1924 that the "local notables" were "nice, simple, hospitable people who are totally untouched by political agitation so long as they are understood and treated politely and feel that their position is recognized."[106] Bolstering such conceptions was the relative distance many of these administrators experienced from Indians, whether out of racial prejudice, pressure of work, transfers or linguistic difficulties. The report of the Simon Commission, which visited India in 1928 to examine political progress there, concluded that there was especially a growing disconnect between local District Officers and local people.[107] Henry Cotton, a prominent ICS man in Bengal in the 1880s, had recognized this much earlier, noting the instability of a system where rule lay in the hands of "a small number of foreign visitors, in a state of isolation produced by a difference in religion, ideas and manners, which cuts them off from all intimate communion with the people."[108] An Indian who had joined the ICS after the First World War remembered: "It is strange to reflect that the members of the Civil Service, whether British or Indian, hardly ever met the political leaders."[109] As one historian of colonial rule has concluded, "the social isolation and political biases of officials often meant that the intelligence was not read aright," and that furthermore, colonial officials spent much of their time "talking to the wrong people," including landlords and local notables.[110] In a memoir of his time in India, P.J. Griffiths showed that such ideas carried over even after 1947, concluding that Hindu society had been "static" since the year 400, concentrated in the villages, and that social equality was "a concept necessarily foreign to Hinduism."[111]

This conception of India also marked the thinking of Sir Malcolm Hailey, a long-serving member of the ICS, and even more significantly, an influential advisor to the India Office and the Indian Secretary during the 1930s. Indeed, those in policy-making circles regarded his counsel as nearly indispensable. With a career in India that had begun in 1894, Hailey brought a wealth of experience to Indian political questions, including his stints as Chief Commissioner in Delhi

105 Shahid Amin, *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura 1922–1992* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1995), pp. 109–110, 192.

106 Quoted in Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, p. 187.

107 O'Malley, *Indian Civil Service*, p. 196.

108 Quoted in Gilmour, *Ruling Caste*, p. 259.

109 H.V.R. Iengar quoted in Kewal L. Panjabi, ed., *The Civil Servant in India: By Ex-Indian Civil Servants* (Bombay, 1965), p. 121.

110 C.A. Bayly, "Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India," *Modern Asian Studies* 27/1 (1993), pp. 3–43, esp. 39–41.

111 P.J. Griffiths, *The British Impact on India* (London, 1952), pp. 23–24, 240.

and as Governor of the Punjab from 1924–1928 and of the United Provinces from 1928–1934 (a period in which he simultaneously governed and advised London).[112] However, as his biographer has noted, Hailey's view of British India was complicated and problematic. Influenced by the paternalistic nature of British administration in the Punjab, where he had had his first ICS posting, Hailey was committed to the notion of the peasantry as the solid backbone of India, as well as to the belief that religion remained a fundamental dividing force in Indian society.[113] He reminded a colleague in 1934 that "the cow is still the most important figure in Indian politics!"[114] Furthermore, most of Hailey's experience in India, and in the Punjab particularly, was not in local administration, but in governance at the higher levels, leaving him with perhaps a more theoretical than grounded understanding of Indian political behavior.[115] As John Cell concluded, Hailey was too perceptive not to note the strength and appeal of Indian nationalism by the 1930s, but "emotionally" he was unwilling to abandon his conviction that the Congress Party did not represent the "real" India and thus ready to continue searching for ways to postpone the dismantling of the Raj.[116] Such a sensibility, in a man of such influence and standing, could only have had a significant impact on the course of the Indian policies fashioned by those he advised.[117]

The presence of these assumptions in colonial thinking in India may not have been, however, an indication that culture was the truly determinative factor in official assessments of Indian behavior. Ruling India had become a massive, unwieldy and challenging venture by the start of the 1920s. As if India's geographical size, linguistic diversity and population were not enough, there were

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112 The most complete account of Hailey's life and service, and one to which this present recounting owes a great debt, is Cell, *Hailey*.

113 Cell, *Hailey*, pp. 212–213. For an account of life in the Punjab that shows some flaws in the British conception of this peasant population, see Andrew J. Major, "State and Criminal Tribes in Colonial Punjab: Surveillance, Control and Reclamation of the 'Dangerous Classes,'" *Modern Asian Studies* 33/3 (1999), pp. 657–688.

114 Hailey to F.H. Brown, 19 July 1934, India Office Hailey Papers, Mss. Eur. e.220/27c/463–467.

115 Cell, *Hailey*, p. 12. Cell also concludes that Hailey's report on the Amritsar massacre "underestimated severely the degree to which nationalism had penetrated the consciousness of ordinary Indians" (p. 67).

116 Cell, *Hailey*, pp. 203–213.

117 The importance of such perceptions in shaping colonial knowledge holds true for other modern empires as well. Martin Thomas has concluded of French rule in the Middle East that "[i]ntelligence assessment reflected the underlying cultural assumptions and accumulated experiences of district officers, tax and education inspectors, regional governors and central government administrators." M. Thomas, "Crisis management in colonial states: Intelligence and counter-insurgency in Morocco and Syria after the First World War," *Intelligence and National Security*, 21/5 (October 2006), pp. 697–716.

specific aspects of British governance that further complicated the administration of the Raj. Though the hierarchy of British rule seemed fairly simple, those who occupied these administrative positions often found themselves in great conflict, especially over issues of responsibility and authority between those in India and those in London. The Secretary of State for India, a member of the Cabinet, enjoyed final authority over Indian policy, but was responsible, ultimately, not to administrators there, but to metropolitan politicians and party supporters. The India Office in London, staffed by career civil servants drawn from some of the same educational and "gentlemanly" backgrounds as the ministers they served, worked both to advise the Secretary and to implement policy, a massive responsibility that made the India Office a huge department of state by the early twentieth century.[118] These Whitehall mandarins, like Sir Arthur Hirtzel and Sir S. Findlater Stewart, who served as successive Permanent Under-Secretaries between 1924 and 1937, were not members of the Indian Civil Service though, their expertise residing much more in the mastery of bureaucratic processes and administration. Of course, that did not stop Hirtzel from asserting that, among other things, in India "'the principle of contradiction' is not a law of thought."[119] Conversely, the Government of India, while bound to London, did see itself also as engaged in protecting policies designed to bolster British rule, and even in safeguarding some Indian concerns, against the political expediency of the party politicians at Westminster. Since the late nineteenth century, there had emerged a series of disputes between the India Office and the Government of India concerning issues as various as the regulation of Indian prostitution to India's fiscal autonomy and its tariff policy for Lancashire textiles.[120] Moreover, by the early twentieth century, the Government of India had claimed its own foreign policy prerogatives, extending its own subsidiary rule over parts of Arabia and the Middle East, acting to preserve the interests of South Asians now scattered from South Africa to Trinidad, and even, after the war, occupying its own position in the League of Nations.[121] Divisions of opinion and

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118 One of the few administrative histories of the India Office is Arnold P. Kaminsky, *The India Office, 1880–1910* (Westport, CT, 1986). Hugh Tinker has noted of the India Office advisers that their "entire career was passed in London, so they tended to view India as it was when they first joined the office and regarded any pressures for change as of transient significance." H. Tinker, *Viceroy: Curzon to Mountbatten* (Karachi, 1997), p. 7.

119 Hirtzel to Lord Irwin, 26 January 1929, India Office Irwin Papers, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/209.

120 For the former, see Philippa Levine, "Rereading the 1890s: Venereal Disease as 'Constitutional Crisis' in Britain and British India," *Journal of Asian Studies* 55/3 (1996), pp. 585–612; for the latter: Andrew Muldoon, "'An unholy row in Lancashire': The Textile Lobby, Conservative Politics, and Indian Policy, 1931–35," *Twentieth Century British History* 14/2 (2003), pp. 93–111.

121 Priya Satia has recently noted the Indian Government's efforts to make post-war Iraq its own in "Developing Iraq: Britain, India and the Redemption of Empire and Technology in

mutual distrust between the Indian Secretary and the Viceroy marked their efforts to derail the nationalists in the mid-1930s as well.

The politicization of the highest levels of Indian administration was another potentially disruptive, or at least complicating, factor in governing the Raj. The Viceroyalty, as well as the prestigious Governorships of Bombay, Madras and Bengal, had become part of British domestic political patronage, leading to the appointment of administrators who may have been well-connected at Westminster, but who had very little experience of India themselves. In the 1930s, for example, past and future Conservative MP's occupied all three of these Governorships.[122] Such a process of appointment had serious implications, especially for the supposed independence of these influential Governors from the concerns of the party leadership that had appointed them.[123] This situation also meant that, party political considerations aside, Indian policy-making at its highest levels, whether in India or in London, was in the hands of a fairly homogeneous few whose exposure to ideas about India and its inhabitants had been narrow and confined very much to specific, recurrent tropes of an elite colonial discourse that permeated the world of such Tory gentlemen.

These senior administrators did not, of course, live completely isolated lives, whether in India or in London, but their own access to information about indigenous politics and society was limited in important ways. These restrictions allowed cultural stereotypes and assumptions to remain unchallenged, either as a means of interpreting Indian actions or as a substitute where information was unavailable. There were several reasons why information, and political intelligence particularly, did not make its way either smoothly or accurately into the hands of imperial policy-makers. Governors, especially political appointees, and other senior administrators operated within a circumscribed world, usually meeting only Indians from the urban economic and civic elite, a system one scholar has aptly named "'neo-darbari' politics."[124] These Britons were, of course, surrounded by Indian servants and retainers constantly, but these figures hardly registered on the colonial conscience as even real persons.[125] The Indian Civil

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the First World War," *Past & Present*, no. 197 (November 2007), pp. 211–255.

[122] Sir Frederick Sykes and Lord Brabourne in Bombay, Lord Erskine and Sir George Stanley in Madras and Sir Frederick Stanley Jackson and Sir John Anderson in Bengal.

[123] Governors in Bombay and Madras in the late 1800s were allowed direct correspondence with the Indian Secretary, while all other provincial administrators were not (Gilmour, *Ruling Caste*, p. 21).

[124] D.A. Low, "The Climactic Years 1917–1947" in Low, ed., *Congress & the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917–1947* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 4; Zareer Masani, *Indian Tales of the Raj* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1987).

[125] On the ubiquitous and disquieting presence of Indian servants, see Collingham, *Imperial Bodies*, pp. 93–113.

Service, upon whose presumed expertise British rule rested, was not a repository of wholly reliable information either. In some ways, this fabled "steel frame" of district officers, magistrates and advisers seemed in danger of collapsing during the interwar years, as morale and recruitment fell, while workloads increased.[126] Already charged with immense judicial, administrative and fiscal responsibilities, ICS men found themselves transferred frequently around India with little time to familiarize themselves with local languages, social structures or cultures.[127] One administrator later remembered that he had learned Marathi as an ICS probationer, but was never posted anywhere that he could use it.[128] Moreover, the extension of some political concessions to Indians in 1909 and 1919 had provoked criticism from ICS men concerned about their future and about a perceived Indian inability for self-government. There had emerged by the 1920s a real hostility between the ICS membership and a series of politically-appointed Viceroys in particular, potentially jeopardizing the sort of cooperation and information exchange required to sustain colonial rule.[129]

These political obstacles not only influenced how British administrators saw India, but also how they interacted with the indigenous population, causing significant problems with information-gathering by the Raj. Even without these hindrances, however, the technical practice of intelligence collection in this colonial state remained flawed in its structure and its mechanics. As historians of the Raj know quite well, the bureaucracy of British India generated an astounding amount of paperwork: correspondence, reports, circulars, censuses and all manner of other supervisory documents.[130] Simply keeping up with the flow of information,

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126 L.S.S. O'Malley, *The Indian Civil Service, 1601–1930* (London, 1931), pp. 147–149.

127 Potter, *India's Political Administrators*, chs 1–2; Charles Allen, ed., *Plain Tales from the Raj: Images of British India in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1975), Chapter 4.

128 *A British Tale of Indian and Foreign Service: The Memoirs of Sir Ian Scott*, Dennis Judd, ed. (London, 1999), p. 37. Gilmour notes of the Victorian Raj that "many Civilians turned up in their first district largely ignorant of its language." (Gilmour, *Ruling Caste*, p. 61).

129 Ann Ewing, "The Indian Civil Service 1919–1924: Service Discontent and the Response in London and in Delhi," *Modern Asian Studies* 18/1 (1984), pp. 33–53. For criticism of the central Government of India as out of touch with provincial issues, see Humphrey Trevelyan, *The India We Left* (London, 1972), p. 121.

130 As Antoinette Burton has noted recently, colonial archives can be daunting places for historians even before they realize just how much there is to read. See Burton, "Archive Stories; Gender in the Making of Imperial and Colonial Histories," in Phillippa Levine, ed., *Gender and Empire* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 281–293. As Thomas Richards has remarked more generally of colonial records: "we have only begun to scratch the archive" Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London, 1993), p. 4. Durba Ghosh has recently noted not only how much the Indian archives contain, but also what is not there, or hidden there, as well. See Durba Ghosh, "Decoding the nameless: gender, subjectivity and historical methodology in reading the archives of colonial India" in Kathleen Wilson, ed., *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity and Modernity in Britain and the Empire 1600–1840* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 297–316.

much less analyzing and assessing it, was a Herculean task, one that distracted local officials from cultivating potential sources, and often resulted in the production of reports that were pro-forma or, as Christopher Bayly has put it, "curiously ritualized documents."[131] There were indeed efforts to construct and utilize a separate system of intelligence collection in India, building upon the institutions that had emerged at the turn of the century to counter violent nationalist activity, especially in Bengal.[132] By the end of the 1920s there was a central Intelligence Bureau for the Government of India in New Delhi, supported by Criminal Investigation Departments of one form or another in each province.[133] The Intelligence Bureau in Delhi, in coordination with British domestic intelligence and New Scotland Yard, fed information to the Indian Political Intelligence division of the India Office in London.[134] Among the items gathered by the IPI were fortnightly summaries of local events submitted by each province, police surveillance reports and information gathered from censoring and opening Indian mail. The system was hardly perfect though, with the Delhi CID limited to a staff of 55 in 1930, and with the simultaneous existence of three different intelligence-gathering organizations in the Northwest Frontier Provinces until 1933.[135]

This interwar intelligence apparatus, of course, did nothing to lighten the workloads of the provincial civil servants who were expected to provide the biweekly reports which served as the nexus of the entire system. In Bombay, to take one example of what these officials faced, the secretary of the province's Home Department received near-daily reports from the Bombay city police commissioner, weekly abstracts of intelligence from the provincial police generally, digests of local editorial opinion for the fortnight and, of course, accounts of revenue collection, criminal prosecutions and other sundry affairs.[136] Limited to four or five pages, these biweekly reports could not help, therefore, but be selective, reductive and even unintentionally misleading. In practice, these local summaries, with a few exceptions, soon came to resemble each other with some frequency, both in form and content, reporting on public meetings, local

131 Bayly, "Knowing the Country," p. 38.

132 Richard J. Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence: British Intelligence and the Defence of the Indian Empire 1904–1924* (London, 1995).

133 Madras seemed to have no true Special Branch until the 1940s however. See Michael Silvestri, "The Thrill of 'Simply Dressing Up': The Indian Police, Disguise and Intelligence Work in Colonial India," *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History* 2/2 (2001), fn. 17.

134 For the records of the IPI, see the files in the India Office classified under L/P&J/12.

135 P.J. Griffiths, *To Guard My People: The History of the Indian Police* (London, 1971), pp. 342–354.

136 For an example of what the Bombay Home Department Secretary tackled in 1930 and 1931 alone, see Mahrashtra State Archives Online: "Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India," vol. II, Parts I–III. (Hereafter as MSAO) This material is located at: *http://www.maharashtra.gov.in/english/gazetteer/Source_material_files/Source_material.htm*.

crime figures, prices and prosecutions.[137] These reports, and others from Delhi, demonstrated furthermore a greater reliance on local newspapers and other journals than on native informants for raw intelligence.[138] India was awash in information by the 1920s, with the emergence of all sorts of political newspapers, social and economic organizations and strikes and demonstrations, so it was not surprising that busy civil servants tended to grasp at the most accessible sources they had and to pass what they gleaned on to Delhi and London.

The Government of India did not possess the manpower, funds or legal sanction necessary to carry out a full-scale operation of surveillance and infiltration of the nationalist movement.[139] This was especially evident in the countryside, as in the U.P. where, in one historian's estimation, changes in police practice reduced the number of indigenous agents like *chaukidars* (watchmen) by two-thirds from 1900 to 1930.[140] The head of the provincial police admitted in 1931, therefore, that "[o]ur intelligence system has broken down and we are no longer in a position to anticipate communal disturbances and breaches of the peace in rural areas."[141] Furthermore, those Indian police constables and officials who made up the bulk of the force were themselves limited in the information they could collect. Well-known and recognized even in cities, these Indians could not observe political gatherings unobtrusively and, as the nationalist movement grew, so did the ostracism of these men, leaving them further hampered in developing reliable sources of information.[142] The director of the Delhi Intelligence Bureau, David Petrie, recognized in some way the difficulties faced by Indian policemen, noting in 1929 the potential for "disaster if we let the Police get the idea that Government is impotent in upholding its position and authority; for we can scarcely blame any Indian for thinking that, if a Nationalist Government is about to be established, his lot will scarcely be an enviable one who has been found fighting in the last ditch for the British Raj."[143]

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[137] See, for example, the reports from the U.P. for 1929–1930 at L/P&J/12/695.

[138] On the impact of the emergence of this Indian political press as a new "ecumene" in North India, see Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 351. For remarks on the rise of these newspapers as sources of intelligence, see Bayly, "Knowing the Country," p. 40.

[139] For the Indian Government's lack of enthusiasm for using secret police and their lack of legal standing to pursue Gandhi as a terrorist, see Popplewell, *Intelligence and Imperial Defence*, pp. 317, 333–334.

[140] Gyanesh Kudaisya, *Region, Nation, "Heartland": Uttar Pradesh in India's Body Politic* (New Delhi, 2006), p. 124.

[141] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[142] *Ibid.*, pp. 48–49.

[143] Quoted in Anandswarup Gupta, *The Police in British India 1861–1947* (New Delhi, 1979), p. 445.

During the early 1900s the Bengal Police had had some success in using informants and in penetrating smaller revolutionary organizations, and in the 1920s the Intelligence Bureau had managed to place Indian undercover operatives into the Indian Communist Party led by M.N. Roy.[144] However, these operations focused narrowly on certain groups, ones whose activities were more easily seen as "seditious" than nationalist marches or mass meetings. Regarding the latter, the most that provincial governments, like those in the Punjab and Bombay, might do was to observe these gatherings and report that the speeches were "beyond the understanding of many" in attendance or that their participants came from the "ignorant masses and particularly youthful element [who] must be impressed by demonstrations and influenced by violent speeches delivered with impunity."[145] Financial considerations also hampered the level and frequency of intelligence reporting from India to London; at one point in early 1931, in the immediate aftermath of the Gandhi-Irwin pact, the India Office asked the Home Department in Delhi to cease sending periodic telegrams on Indian press commentary due to the expense, and simply to wait until the India Office asked for specific information on Indian opinion.[146] The Government of India was able to continue to intercept letters to and from notable Indian politicians, including both Nehrus, Gandhi and Tej Bahadur Sapru, but this was hardly a secret to the nationalists, nor was it an effective means of judging nationalist sentiment and organization at the local or provincial levels.[147] One of Jawaharlal Nehru's correspondents noted at the end of a letter: "I am sure the gentleman who reads this letter before it reaches you is a nice man, kind in his home etc. So I hope that, having copied the letter, he will send it on promptly to you."[148] And, having imprisoned Gandhi in mid-1930, administrators found that no one at Yeravda Central Prison, or in the higher levels of the prison system generally, spoke Gujarati well enough to monitor any interviews the Mahatma might give.[149]

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[144] For the former, see D.K. Lahiri Choudhury, "Sinews of Panic and the Nerves of Empire: the Imagined State's Entanglement with Information Panic, India c.1880–1912," *Modern Asian Studies* 38/4 (2004), pp. 965–1002. For the latter, see Christopher Andrew, *Her Majesty's Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (New York, 1986), pp. 335–337.

[145] Extract from Local Govt. Report (Punjab), April 1928, L/P&J/12/292/13; Bombay Govt. report to Home Department, Govt. of India, 30 January 1930, India Office Sykes papers, Mss. Eur. f.150/2a/5–6.

[146] India Office telegram to Home Department, April 1931, L/P&J/7/80/28.

[147] For examples of this postal censorship, see reports of Indian Intelligence Bureau, 26 April 1928 and 1 November 1928, regarding correspondence by Motilal and Jawaharlal Nehru, L/P&J/12/292/23–29.

[148] Edward Thompson to J. Nehru, 26 October 1936, in J. Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (New York, 1960), p. 208.

[149] Report of Inspector-General of Prisons, 8 May 1930, MSAO III/III/194–196.

An assessment of the precise weight that cultural presumptions had on Indian intelligence gathering, both in its operation and in analyses that flowed from it, is therefore difficult because the presence of these ideas was not the only flaw in the system. In the first place, the colonial state in the interwar years faced an overwhelming task simply in administering India, never mind trying to monitor and assess nationalist activities and the rapidly expanding Indian political press. Due to the pressure of this work, as well as some cultural presumptions about rural India in particular, district officers and others were often not in touch with representative local opinion, just as politically-appointed Governors, and even Viceroys, who themselves often had little experience in India, had contact with only a very limited slice of Indian society as well. Moreover, those departments of the colonial state dedicated to the collection and dissemination of intelligence lacked all sorts of resources to sustain an operation of such scale and scope. Thus, confronted by both a strengthening nationalist movement and a correspondingly inadequate system for monitoring or analyzing it, it would not have been surprising if the policy-makers of this colonial administration had latched firmly onto what they had understood were, and what they believed to be, the "real" ways in which India worked.

This sort of development was not without precedent in the nearly two centuries of British rule. As Bayly has noted for the nineteenth century, this "practical orientalism" often resulted from an "absence of real intelligence or a fuller understanding of the society [the British] were dealing with" and led to "officials [taking] appearances and argot to be symbolic of character and intentions." "Information panics" grew out of the colonial state's inability to comprehend indigenous social and cultural practices and out of the periodic rumors of insurrection that inevitably plagued a conquering colonial power, thus underlining the "limitations of colonial power and knowledge."[150] In the 1920s and 1930s, British officialdom may not have felt panic, but neither was the Indian administration fully sure of what it had in Gandhi and the Congress, nor sure how to access such information either.[151] One particular intelligence brief on Bengal strikingly articulated just what this lack of reliable and consistent intelligence cost the Raj as the nationalist movement expanded:

> Information is everywhere hard to come by. Police officers are insulted when they go into villages in search of it, and are refused shelter because everyone who helps a police officer is boycotted. Government is, therefore, without information of what is going on in the interior, and it would, in the circumstances at present existing in parts of Bengal, be possible for whole tracts of country so to come under Congress

[150] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 171; see also Martin Thomas, "Colonial States as Intelligence States: Security Policing and the Limits of Colonial Rule in France's Muslim Territories, 1920–1940," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 28/6 (December 2005), pp. 1033–1060, esp. 1038.

[151] Bayly, *Empire and Information*, p. 171.

> domination that the authority of Government would be completely ousted without the Government being much the wiser.[152]

In such an environment, officials may indeed have filled the void with presumptions or, in other words, "a series of flimsy pretexts that were always becoming texts."[153] If poorly informed, however, colonial authorities were not always completely uninformed. What about the role of culture when officials possessed at least some concrete information though? Did cultural beliefs ultimately remain the determining influence in the colonial mind, so powerful that not even masses of contradictory evidence could overwhelm them? The next few chapters pursue these questions in detail.

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[152] Weekly Intelligence Bureau Report, 21 May 1931, L/PJ/12/390/63–68.

[153] Richards, *Imperial Archive*, p. 4.

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Chapter 2
"The heart mesmerizes the head": Lord Irwin and the Nationalists, 1926–1931

Edward, Lord Irwin (the future Lord Halifax) arrived in India as Viceroy in 1926 during a lull in political activity, following a hectic period from 1919 through the early 1920s. At the end of the First World War the Indian National Congress, angered that Indian participation in the war had not yielded commensurate political reform of the Raj, abandoned its traditional constitutionalist methods and embraced Gandhian civil disobedience. Gandhi not only led a successful non-cooperation campaign, but, of great concern to the British, forged a workable alliance between the Congress and Muslims.[1] Gandhi's involvement in the largely Muslim Khilafat movement, his tours of India to promote *satyagraha* and civil action, and the massive protest which greeted the Prince of Wales's visit in 1921 all demonstrated the rise of an effective and organized nationalist movement and of a charismatic and inspirational political personality. The colonial response to these protests was hardly uniform, with some administrators and politicians urging repression and force and others looking for ways to conciliate at least some sections of Indian opinion, especially politicians who viewed Gandhian mass action with some concern.

The most infamous act of violent repression came in April 1919 in Amritsar in the Punjab, where the British Brigadier Reginald Dyer ordered troops to fire on a peaceful political meeting, killing nearly 400 people. Dyer was cashiered after an investigation, but he found numerous supporters in Britain and in the British community in India, many of whom contributed to a fund to replace his lost pension.[2] Violent attacks by Indians on British institutions drew equal, and even disproportionate, reactions and led to the mass imprisonment of local nationalist organizers and volunteers. However, the desire to conciliate and distract Indian opinion through limited concessions also found British supporters. Drafted by the Indian Secretary and the Viceroy, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, embodied in the 1919 Government of India Act, represented Britain's greatest concessions to India to that date, as they included an increase of the all-India electorate, the inclusion of directly elected members in the Central Legislative Assembly, and, most importantly, the introduction of dyarchy in provincial governments, where Indian ministers gained responsibility for education and agriculture among other

1 See Judith Brown, *Gandhi: Prisoner of Hope* (New Haven, 1989), pp. 139–175.

2 Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London, 2005), Chapters 23–24.

subjects. Chelmsford's successor, Lord Reading, faced with growing protests in both urban areas and the countryside in 1921, asked the British Government to sanction further discussions with the nationalists and to "offer concessions – possibly full provincial autonomy."[3] Both the reforms and Reading's suggestions drew heavy criticism from Conservatives in Britain, criticism that was marked by a pronounced anti-Semitic view of Montagu and Reading (born Rufus Isaacs). Regarding Montagu, the editor of the *Spectator* was "intensely disgusted and annoyed at the way in which the Government are allowing a Jew in a panic ... to lay a mine which must ruin British power in India."[4] In late 1921, nearly one hundred Tory MPs joined in moving for the censure of Montagu for his "criminal betrayal of every white man and white woman in India all through 1919, 1920 and 1921."[5] Reading's response to these criticisms was both plaintive and a little bitter: he wrote to Geoffrey Dawson: "I wish you could bring home the immense difficulties of keeping India in the Empire voluntarily and not by force." Lord Peel passed along to Baldwin Reading's letter of July 1923, in which the beleaguered Viceroy complained: "I doubt very much whether those at home, even in very high places, quite realise the difficulties a Viceroy has now-a-days to encounter. I do sometimes think that a little better appreciation might be shown at home of the burdens I am bearing."[6]

Defenders of the Raj found some solace in events after 1922. Following the Chauri Chaura violence, Gandhi called off civil disobedience, arguing that Indians needed more self-discipline to follow *satyagraha*. Moreover, the Indian Government arrested Gandhi and jailed him in March 1922; after his release in 1924 he withdrew from political work, spending a year at his ashram. It also seemed that the 1919 reforms might just have divided Indian sentiment enough to insure continued British rule. Within the Congress Party, divisions emerged between those who had entered provincial councils solely to disrupt them and those who saw opportunities in provincial ministries and adopted an attitude of "Responsive Cooperation." Staunch Gandhians refused even to consider joining the councils.[7] Political participation in provincial councils also helped to destroy

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[3] Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 11. George Lloyd, Governor of Bombay, described Reading's plan as "contemptible" in a letter to Austen Chamberlain. See Austen Chamberlain Papers (Birmingham University Library) AC 18/1/27, 24 March 1922.

[4] Quoted in Kaul, "A New Angle of Vision," p. 229; see also Kaul, *Reporting the Raj*, pp. 188–191.

[5] Quoted in H. Montgomery Hyde, *Lord Reading: The Life of Rufus Isaacs, First Marquess of Reading* (London, 1967), p. 370.

[6] Reading to Dawson, August 1923, quoted in J. Wench, *Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times* (London, 1955), p. 221; Peel to Baldwin, 24 July 1923 (enclosing letter from Reading), Baldwin Papers (Cambridge University Library) SB 102/13–17.

[7] This discussion owes much to Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India: 1885–1947* (Madras, 1983), pp. 226–237.

the earlier Hindu-Muslim unity of the Khilafat movement, setting the two groups against each other, and especially provoking Muslim fears about Congress control of much of India. As Sumit Sarkar has noted, however, Hindu extremist groups were equally responsible for the rise of communalism and sectarian violence, demonstrated most notably by the resurrection of the particularly volatile Hindu *Mahasabha* in northern India.[8] An India Office intelligence summary from 1924 indicated that Malaviya, the leader of this group, was not comfortable with Gandhi nor with others in the Congress, implying that he might serve as a useful wedge in splitting some Hindus off from the party.[9]

The notion that Britain might profitably exploit Indian religious divisions appealed greatly to Lord Birkenhead, the new Indian Secretary in 1924, whose presence at the India Office further gratified those who wished to see a forceful response to Indian nationalism. The *Morning Post* thought his efforts would "recover a lost Dominion."[10] Birkenhead's biographer states simply that he "approached India in 1924 as a thorough reactionary."[11] Birkenhead made his feelings very clear in an early discussion with Reading over the timing for the appointment of a commission, mandated by the 1919 reforms, which was supposed to review the Indian situation by 1929:

> To me it is frankly inconceivable that India will ever be fit for Dominion self-government. My present view is that we ought rigidly to adhere to the date proposed in the Act for a re-examination of the situation, and that it is not likely, unless matters greatly change in the interval, that such a re-examination will suggest the slightest extension. In the meantime, little as I have liked dyarchy, obviously it must be given its chance.[12]

He also moved to reassure any doubters about his firmness towards India, pronouncing in the Lords: "In common with many of my colleagues in the Cabinet I must of course accept full responsibility for that great constitutional change [the 1919 reforms]. But I may be permitted to say I entertained greater doubts upon this reform than some of those with which I cooperated."[13]

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8 Sarkar, *ibid*., p. 235. See also Mushirul Hasan, *Nationalism and Communal Politics in India, 1916–1928* (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 185–262.

9 Report on M.M. Malaviya, 19 March 1924, L/P&J/12/201/27–29.

10 Quoted in John Campbell, *F.E. Smith: First Earl of Birkenhead* (London, 1983), p. 727.

11 *Ibid*., p. 727.

12 Birkenhead to Reading, 4 December 1924, quoted in *ibid*., p. 733.

13 Speech in House of Lords, 7 July 1925, quoted in Dean, "Contrasting Attitudes," p. 131. See also Birkenhead's remarks enclosed in a letter from W. Johnston (India Office) to Patrick Gower (Conservative Central Office), 6 June 1925 and subsequently passed on to Baldwin. SB 93/201–203.

Indian discord, within the Congress and between the sects, delighted Birkenhead, who had counted on this sort of disunity to secure continued British rule. He wrote Reading in 1925:

> The split between [the Congress] and the Independents is a new and promising and unexpected development. I hope that it will grow. But I have always placed my highest and most permanent hopes upon the eternity of the communal situation. The greater the political progress made by the Hindus, the greater in my judgement will the Moslem distrust and antagonism become.[14]

In late 1925 Birkenhead, perhaps convinced by the Viceroy's case for negotiation, or more likely inspired by the chance to sow further distrust among Indian politicians, suggested to Reading that since domestic politics dictated an early announcement of the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission (the review body mandated by the 1919 Act), it might be possible to use the promise of such "acceleration" as either "a useful bargain counter or for further disintegrating the Swarajist party."[15] Reading, facing a motion in the Assembly in early 1926 for the early appointment of the Statutory Commission, eagerly grasped Birkenhead's idea, and, to vitiate the Assembly debate, made it clear that such an announcement must come very soon.[16] The Indian Secretary, however, soon had second thoughts, as "there has been no advance in Indian attitude to justify it" and "when promise has once been formally made it will be difficult if not impossible to go back on it however unreasonably politicians may behave."[17] Reading's obvious disappointment at Birkenhead's retreat indicated the extent to which he indeed believed in a more moderate policy of negotiation, not antagonism: "I think my original view was right and would have had a distinctly favourable effect on the political situation in India."[18] This exchange characterized the final month of Reading's Viceroyalty. Though hardly a Gandhian sympathizer, he had seen the impact of the first All-India protests in the early 1920s, and had maintained a policy of promoting less confrontational relations between the Crown and the nationalists. He departed India amidst communal rioting, with Gandhi in self-imposed silence, and perhaps weary of an Indian Secretary who viewed the situation with some satisfaction. As he noted in one of his final telegrams to London, what followed was the responsibility of his successor: Irwin.[19]

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14 Quoted in Dean, "Contrasting Attitudes," p. 135.

15 Birkenhead to Reading, 10 December 1925, India Office Private Office Papers, L/PO/6/22/388–390.

16 Reading to Birkenhead, 2 February 1926, L/PO/6/22/356–364.

17 Birkenhead to Reading, 5 February 1926, L/PO/6/22/352–355.

18 Reading to Birkenhead, 11 February 1926, L/PO/6/22/329.

19 Ibid.

The Churchman as Viceroy

Three aspects of Irwin's career and personality proved integral to his Viceregal experience and to his influence on Indian policy. These included his familiarity, or lack thereof, with India, his personal sense of self-assurance and his close ties to British policymakers at the highest levels. Prior to becoming Viceroy, he had had little if any experience of India. The *Times* noted upon news of his appointment that Irwin was "essentially a home-loving Englishman" with "no experience whatever of Oriental problems or administration."[20] Irwin's sense of India came from his own elite education, his social contacts and the small circle of advisers in New Delhi whom he described as his "wise men," including Malcolm Hailey and Harry Haig, both ICS elders, David Petrie of the Intelligence Bureau and Frederick Sykes, a fellow Conservative and Governor of Bombay.[21] Irwin also met with Indians, but mainly those from elite and "moderate" backgrounds like T.B. Sapru and M.R. Jayakar, non-Congress politicians who often acted as mediators between Irwin and the Congress leadership.

Irwin's personality, especially his sense of self and his rather pronounced piety, further shaped his approach in India. Contemporaries, and historians thereafter, have tended to describe Irwin in remarkably similar terms: aloof, serious, devout, cunning – all of which coalesced in Churchill's characterization of the man as the "Holy Fox."[22] A Fellow of All Souls, he possessed a self-confident intelligence, one which led him to believe soon after arriving in India that he might settle communal tensions by "meeting some of the political leaders and trying to get them to see some sense."[23] His judgments of others could also be harsh: Sapru and Jayakar seemed "consummate fools" while Gandhi was "quite remote from the practical issues, and struck me very much as a casual visitor from another planet."[24] Even fellow Britons could not escape his withering eye. Of one Liberal politician, Irwin noted with faint praise: "His intellect is all right, but I think what is immediately wanted is some of the simpler human qualities in which I am not so sure he is so strong."[25] This assessment came from a man of whom even a deeply sympathetic biographer has conceded had no discernible sense of humor, little flair for informality and a pronounced social awkwardness.[26]

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20 *Times*, 30 October 1925, p. 13.

21 Irwin's description of these advisers is in Irwin to Geoffrey Dawson, 7 April 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/45.

22 Andrew Roberts has made the most prominent attempt at rehabilitation in his *"The Holy Fox": A Life of Lord Halifax* (London, 1991).

23 Irwin to Baldwin, 28 April 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/14.

24 Irwin to Dawson, 6 November 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/356; Irwin to Lang, 30 November 1927, Lang Papers (Lambeth Palace Library) LANG 190/253–257.

25 Irwin to Dawson, 2 February 1928, quoted in Dean, "Contrasting Attitudes," p. 173.

26 Roberts, *"The Holy Fox"*, p. 9.

As a close friend of Archbishops of Canterbury and York, especially social progressives like Cosmo Gordon Lang and William Temple, Irwin occupied a prominent lay position within the Church.[27] Irwin's piety was noticeable, if not always appreciated: Birkenhead, although he professed his affection for Irwin when he was chosen as Viceroy, also noted snidely, "How much better is life and how much more paying it is to be blameless than to be brilliant."[28] An Indian politician, meanwhile, described the Irwin-Gandhi negotiations of early 1931 as a meeting of "the two uncrucified Christs."[29] A religious sensibility did in fact seem to affect Irwin's conception of his role in India; he wrote to Archbishop Lang in 1927 that "we are, in part, paying for the sins of past days, and that perhaps we have been slow to foresee what would happen when past history, economics and nationalism all met in a clash."[30] His declared intention, at least at the start of his Viceroyalty, was to mediate between Indian groups and "put Government in the strong position of the active promoter of unity."[31]

Irwin's greatest asset in securing the Viceroyalty, however, was the strength of his connections to the other members of the Tory leadership. He was a member of the party's inner circle, trusted and respected. These Conservative frontbenchers could rest assured that they had not only sent a capable man to India, but that they had appointed a firm friend as well. Baldwin was in fact greatly torn over Irwin's departure: "... I miss you more than I can say: indeed I regard my sending you to India as the one great unselfish act of my life! I would give worlds for a talk. Bless you my friend. You are doing magnificently."[32] "I miss you, my dear Edward, a great deal," wrote Neville Chamberlain in 1926, "Somehow or another ... you are apt to leave a hole behind you which no one else can quite fill."[33] Irwin could also count Geoffrey Dawson, editor of the *Times* among his friends.[34] These close personal and political ties, bound up with both affection and respect, insured that Irwin would have a significant influence over policy decisions made by the party leadership.

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27 Stuudert-Kennedy, *Providence & the Raj*, p. 212.

28 Quoted in Campbell, *Birkenhead*, p. 744.

29 Srinivasa Sastri to Venkatarama Sastri, 17 February 1931, quoted in Judith Brown, *Nehru: A Political Life* (New Haven, 2003), p. 98.

30 Irwin to Lang, 8 April 1927, LANG 41/257–263.

31 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 17 May 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/266.

32 Baldwin to Irwin, 15 September 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/253; Keith Middlemas and John Barnes, *Baldwin: A Biography* (London, 1969), p. 536.

33 N. Chamberlain to Irwin, 15 August 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/82a. See also David Dilks, *Neville Chamberlain: Volume I: Pioneering and Reform, 1869–1929* (Cambridge, 1984), p. 440.

34 See Dawson's anticipation of arguments about Irwin's lack of imperial experience in the *Times*, 30 October 1925.

It was religious tension and violence, not nationalist pressure, however, which Irwin faced in his first year in India. Indeed, the communal issue was so prominent, and apparently so intractable, that it would eventually help to bring Gandhi back into public politics in 1928.[35] April and May 1926, Irwin's first months as Viceroy, saw intense violence in Calcutta. Although the extent of the violence, especially: "this new turn of almost indiscriminate assassination," clearly repelled Irwin, it also seemed to propel him, almost immediately, towards the search for a settlement in which he saw himself as the key mediator.[36] Irwin hoped that his involvement in settling the communal dispute might lead to wholesale political discussions with leading Indian nationalists and politicians. The Viceroy was fairly confident that he would be able to find some compromise which satisfied both nationalist and British concerns about the future of India.

Irwin had in fact come to some conclusions about the workings of Indian politics which led him to believe that Britain could defuse much of the ongoing political agitation on the sub-continent and undermine the power of the Congress Party. Like Reading before him, Irwin felt that there was some potential disunity and weakness within the nationalist movement which might prove advantageous to the British. Irwin drew not only on what seemed to be standard colonial stereotypes of Indian behavior, but also on advice and intelligence that supported such views. A 1927 report on Motilal Nehru compiled for the India Office concluded:

> In India, as is, perhaps, needless to state, politics are merely in the nature of a pastime with the wealthy intelligentsia. They indulge in it for purposes of self-aggrandisement, and, unlike Mahatma GANDHI and his immediate followers, all that they say or do in this direction is for the sake of their own name. The moderates, extremists, Swarajists, Liberals, etc., are all apparently close friends privately, but in public they criticize each other, more or less severely – e.g. NEHRU, Sir Tej Bahdur SAPRU, JINNAH, etc., are great friends, and, although they belong to different political camps, they know that they are "just playing a game, captaining different teams.[37]

Irwin looked first to the more "moderate" politicians among the nationalists, especially the Indian Liberals who embraced constitutionalist methods and seemed open to a more deliberate progress towards political reform. These seemingly more accommodating politicians, including T.B. Sapru, Chimanlal Setalvad and Srinivasa Sastri, had rejected Gandhian tactics after the war and had in fact embraced the 1919 reforms, joining provincial councils rather than leading

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35 Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 217–218.

36 Irwin to Baldwin, 28 April 1926, SB 102/78–83.

37 "Extract from New Scotland Yard Report," 28 December 1927, L/P&J/12/313/14–15.

civil disobedience.[38] Though few in number, these Indians seemed likely to remain satisfied with the current pace of political reform and generally well-disposed to the Indian Government. What was required, in Irwin's estimation, was some further British cultivation of this group so as to consolidate a real "moderate" faction in India and further this group's estrangement from the Congress. As Irwin told Reading, this encouragement, likely including some political concessions, would prevent "the Moderate and Liberal Leaders" from remaining "largely the easy victims of Swarajist attack" and would allow these moderates to "achieve some sort of unity." Nevertheless, Irwin also made it clear to the former Viceroy that these Indian moderates could not be expected to join together in the face of the Congress without British help, for even these Indians, some of whom had indeed served the Raj loyally and well, were hampered by their innate Indian character which left them "lacking in qualities of vigour and constructive statesmanship."[39] In embracing the idea of an Indian moderate grouping, Irwin took a path that some in the India Office would have seen as both optimistic and a bit naïve. As one official had warned the Viceroy early in 1927: "The Indian Moderates do very well on the whole in office while we are holding their hands, but they do not seem to have the knack of appealing to the electorates."[40] However, to the Viceroy, these prominent and Anglophilic politicians were not the only Indians who might be attracted away from the Congress Party.

Irwin argued that there existed a split between the Congress leadership and the party's followers. Here, even more so than in his predictions about the behavior of politicians like Sapru, Irwin relied upon cultural assumptions about Indian life. He argued that outside the "extremist" leadership of the Congress, most Indians were fairly fickle in their attachment to the organization and its ultimate goal. Urban Indians particularly, wrote Irwin, possessed many of the characteristics associated with the stereotypical Bengali "babu". Their highly-charged rhetoric hardly indicated that they were firm in their convictions. On the contrary, Irwin told Baldwin:

> In many ways ... [Indian politicians] remind me very much of the mentality of our Labour friends at home. The heart mesmerises the head and words reign supreme! But I am told on all hands that they are singularly responsive to ordinary courtesy and that, as one would expect, sentiment looms very large.[41]

Irwin repeated this sentiment to another influential Tory:

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38 See Sastri to D.V. Gundappa, 10 March 1928, *Sastri Letters*, pp. 173–174.

39 Irwin to Reading, 13 September 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/103.

40 Sir Malcolm Seton to Irwin, 6 January 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/170.

41 Irwin to Baldwin, 28 April 1926, SB 102/78–83.

> I have no doubt that the atmosphere as between Indians and British is much calmer than it was, and this I have no doubt is due in great part to Reading and also to the natural reaction from the high tension that previously obtained. I am always racking my brain as to how to get out of this futile and vicious circle by which we say no advance without co-operation, and they say no co-operation without advance. I cannot help feeling that it is a question more psychological than political. One of the extreme Swaraj people said to me the other day that if only they could trust us it wouldn't matter to them whether we waited five or fifty years. How then to make them believe that we mean what we say?[42]

The Indian penchant for emotion and excitability was therefore propping up the Congress, an organization which did possess an energetic and captivating leadership. Yet Irwin did not believe that the allegiance of Congress followers was very deep. After all, the British understanding of India did not admit that Indians might hold sincere and concrete political beliefs. Indians were sentimental and thus able to be swayed. More importantly, Irwin also relied on the assumption that Indians were inherently corruptible. He predicted that the prospect of personal and tangible gain in the political sphere, even if it were of British provenance, would override Indian attachment to the emotional appeal of the Congress. Even the "Moderates" were only "playing for power."[43] The Viceroy claimed he could already see signs of disaffection in the Congress ranks over the failure of the movement to produce anything concrete:

> [T]he reaction against them that [Reading] helped to start is, I have little doubt, gaining ground and if only their opponents could achieve some sort of unity, I think there will be a good chance of inflicting severe defeat upon them. But this condition is far from fulfillment and I suspect the result may be that the Swarajists will retain a greater measure of power than their popular position really justifies. From all I hear and see, though, I think it is likely that after the Elections and the next Congress, there will be a good deal of strategic retreat on their part from the full discomfort of an untenable position.[44]

"The Swarajists have undoubtedly lost ground as a result of their policy of obstruction," Irwin wrote to Neville Chamberlain, "and if only the other people could unite, I should feel fairly hopeful of seeing some considerable reduction made in Swarajist strength."[45]

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42 Irwin to Dawson, 18 May 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/33.

43 Irwin to Baldwin, 30 November 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/365.

44 Irwin to Reading, 13 September 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/103.

45 Irwin to N. Chamberlain, 15 September 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/108.

Having established to his satisfaction that serious Indian opposition to British rule existed among only a few "extremists" in the Congress leadership and that the bulk of Indian political opinion was open to cooperation or co-option, Irwin then began to explore specific ways in which Britain could take advantage of this situation. Thus began what one observer has described simply as Britain's campaign "to split the nationalist ranks with a view to creating a working entente with its less vehement sections."[46] One way of encouraging more moderate elements was simply through flattery, the Viceroy thought, and urged Baldwin to give the Indian delegates to the 1926 Imperial Conference the honor of meeting the Prime Minister: "If you can, see any of the people who will be representing India at Imperial Conf. or L[eague] of N[ations]. It wd. do good."[47] Irwin also had another strategy for attracting, and strengthening, Indian support: he hoped to announce, at the opening of the 1927 legislative session, that the Statutory Commission mandated by the Montford reforms would be appointed in 1928. This would especially encourage those Indians who had worked the reforms from the start, in 1919, that they had not erred in seeing cooperation as the key to political advance. He reasoned as well that the early announcement would help to settle Indian politics, while the year's delay in the actual naming of the commission might allow communal tensions to subside and moderate politicians to assert themselves, as well as reassure nationalists that Britain was not deliberately sending the commission into a volatile situation in which it would hardly be disposed to recommend further reform.[48] Although Irwin received support for his proposed action from Sir Arthur Hirtzel, the Undersecretary of State for India, he did not gain Birkenhead's approval.[49] Birkenhead wished to keep open the possibility of naming the commission in late 1927, but, more importantly, opposed any unilateral concession to India: "We have only one ace in the hand, and once played we are obviously in a much weaker position."[50] There the matter rested, but only for some months. By the end of 1927 there had emerged a serious political controversy in India over the same Statutory Commission.

The story of the appointment of the Indian Statutory Commission, chaired by the Liberal lawyer and politician Sir John Simon, has received extensive coverage in the detailed, high-political works which have considered the history of the 1935 Act.[51] It is generally agreed that Irwin's advocacy, eventually successful, for a

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46 Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 88.

47 Irwin to Baldwin, 10 August 1926, SB 102/86–87.

48 Irwin to Birkenhead, 13 January 1927, L/PO/6/22/88–90; Irwin to Birkenhead, 20 January 1927, L/PO/6/22/83–85.

49 Hirtzel to Birkenhead, 20 January 1927, L/PO/6/22/86.

50 Birkenhead to Irwin, 21 January 1927, L/PO/6/22/78–82.

51 Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 18–29; Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 33–51; Sarvapelli Gopal, *The Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin* (Cambridge, 1954), pp. 19–27; Campbell, *Birkenhead*, pp. 748–752.

Parliamentary commission which did not include Indians was an immense affront to all sections of nationalist opinion. Irwin was fully aware that "this will make of course a clamour,"[52] yet persisted. Based on his actions in 1926, it appears that he may have done so not because he felt that only Britons were qualified to undertake this task,[53] but because he believed that the inclusion of Indians, with the almost inevitable Hindu-Muslim clashes among them, might discourage reform-minded British commissioners.[54] Such a result, from which India gained nothing, would jeopardize his plan to attract moderates by the extension of gradual reforms.[55] It did not apparently occur to him that Sapru and other Liberals, who had served the Raj, might not accept their exclusion with good grace. When these Indians did indeed protest, Irwin was left to sputter: "These people really have no political sense."[56]

The announcement of the Simon Commission in November 1927 provoked an Indian reaction shattering to Irwin's rosy illusions. The naming of the commission unfortunately followed closely upon the publication of Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, a scathing and ill-informed review of Indian society and morality, and of Hinduism in particular; Irwin wrote Baldwin that the book had "made [Indians] very angry."[57] The Viceroy himself, though conceding that Mayo's descriptions had been a bit "over-coloured," thought that the "general effect" of the book might "be useful if it gives a shock to the unsatisfactory conditions of Hindu thought on many of these subjects."[58] Such Viceregal opinion does not seem surprising, given what we have seen already of Irwin's assumptions about the nature of Indian society. Despite this tension over the Mayo book, Irwin remained sanguine about the future, telling J.J.C. Davidson:

> Here we are all well, having our good weeks and our bad, but on the whole keeping our heads above water. We have just prorogued our democratic assembly after a month's session in which we got into one or two messes but none of them, I hope, insuperable. Was it Lord Palmerston who said that the business of government was that of getting out of one damned hole after another.[59]

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52 Irwin to Dawson, 27 October 1926, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/129. See also Irwin to Baldwin, 30 October 1927, SB 102/123–132.

53 Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 19–20.

54 This is suggested in D.W. Dean, "The Contrasting Attitudes of the Conservative and Labour Parties to the Problems of Empire, 1922–1936 (Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1974), p. 170.

55 For another of Irwin's assertions of the essential need to hold the moderates, see Irwin to Davidson, 9 July 1926, excerpted in Robert Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers, 1910–1937* (London, 1969), p. 307.

56 Irwin to Baldwin, 27 November 1927, SB 102/164–167.

57 Irwin to Baldwin, 30 October 1927, SB 102/123–132.

58 Irwin to N. Chamberlain, 16 August 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/320.

59 Irwin to Davidson, 24 September 1927, Davidson Papers (House of Lords Record Office) JCCD 180.

The fact that the investigating commission was all-white, and did not seem to include important personalities like former Viceroys or party leaders,[60] caused a reunion of various Indian parties and groups which, at least to Irwin, had seemed alienated from each other earlier in the year. For the Viceroy the most distressing aspect of the calls for a boycott of the commission and for greater political freedom was the support which the Liberals and moderates gave to this sentiment. An All Parties Conference in early 1928 voted for "full responsible government" and, led by Motilal Nehru and Sapru, proceeded to draft a new Indian constitution. The plan, published in August 1928 as the Nehru Report, outlined a federation of British India and the princely states which would have "Dominion Status" equal to that enjoyed by Canada and others.[61] However, this proposal did not win wholehearted approval, with many Muslims angered over its failure to promise separate Muslim electorates for the central legislature, and with the more "extreme" members of the Congress, like Motilal's son Jawaharlal Nehru, eager for total independence.[62] It was Gandhi who emerged late in 1928 in an attempt to mediate the dispute. As Judith Brown has described it, Gandhi was armed with both a desire to reunite Indian opposition parties and, following the recent, and successful, peaceful tax protest, or *satyagraha*, in Bardoli, in Gujarat in Northwest India, a new willingness to resume peaceful protest. The resulting compromise in December 1928 called for acceptance of the Nehru Report by the end of 1929, or else the resumption of non-cooperation.[63]

Irwin's first reactions to this rejuvenated movement were not very dramatic. He still felt that any "row" would not be "permanently serious," and he remarked that Liberals like Sapru would be "the most consummate fools if they allow themselves to let slip the opportunity" which the commission presented.[64] However, the intensity of nationalist feeling in all quarters did not decrease rapidly, as he seems to have expected. At the end of November 1927 still, "[t]he storm about the Commission [was] blowing pretty bitterly," and he had to confess, disingenuously, that "I had not fully appreciated how irrational and irresponsible leaders of opinion here could be."[65] As Simon's arrival in early 1928 approached, the Viceroy, though optimistic that events would not play out "too tragically,"

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[60] Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 20.

[61] Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 217–218.

[62] See Gopal, *Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin*, pp. 22–27.

[63] Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 219–224.

[64] Irwin to Hoare, 31 October 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/354; Irwin to Dawson, 6 November 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/356. See also Irwin to Lloyd, 7 November 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/357.

[65] Irwin to Baldwin, 27 November 1927, SB 102/164–167; Irwin to Cosmo Gordon Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, 30 November 1927, LANG 190/253–257. See also Irwin to Simon, 30 November 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/368.

realized as well that the British in India were "still living in the midst of a good deal of storm" which he hoped might abate upon the actual debarkation of the commission.[66]

The boycotts and black-flag demonstrations which greeted Simon and his fellow commissioners in February and March 1928 soon exposed how ill-founded was Irwin's optimism. These events, however, did not cause him to make "a drastic reappraisal of the situation" and embark upon an approach to the nationalists which was markedly different in degree, if not in kind, from that which he had previously pursued.[67] He remained convinced that Indian opposition, while perhaps a bit more serious than he had originally believed, was still structurally weak and open to inducements. The Viceroy assured his colleagues in London of the fundamental immaturity of the Indian political classes, who believed that: "if they go on shouting something favourable to them will happen … I think it is very much like a child refusing to eat its supper. There comes a point when it is no good pleading or reproaching any longer and when its tempers are ignored it may return to eat it on its own."[68]

Irwin persisted in his belief that a large body of Indian opinion existed which would be willing to participate in a gradual process of political reform. He continued to rely on his sense that true opposition could not survive since "Indians as a whole seem to me to lack the quality of perseverance and ... they are thoroughly out of heart with non-co-operation and the rest."[69] Before the Simon Commission announcement, he had perceived an apparent thawing of British-Indian relations:

> I have seen a good many Swarajists, who have lifted their social boycott of Viceroys, and they strike me on the whole as nice people. But dear me! They all have a great deal to learn about the means by which self-government comes. They still pathetically profess to believe that it can be given by a Statute.[70]

Irwin's conviction that Congress-style extremism was not representative of the greater part of Indian opinion seemed to grow stronger once the anti-Simon demonstrations had begun. He confidently predicted to Baldwin: "... there are a good many elements on our side, and shrewd observers still think that time will show that those who are now advocating the extreme courses will not find

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66 Irwin to Baldwin, 27 December 1927, SB 102/177–180; Irwin to Hoare, 3 January 1928, Mss. Eur. e.240/76. See also the Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 12 January 1928, L/P&J/12/59/17–18.

67 Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 41–42; Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 22–29.

68 Irwin to Birkenhead, 23 February 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/29.

69 Irwin to N. Chamberlain, 16 August 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/320.

70 Irwin to J.C. Wedgwood, 14 September 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/332.

it possible to create anything like the complete or effective boycott that they desire."[71] Instead, "I think a good many of those who are engaged in it are not frightfully happy about the course to which they are committed and would not be sorry if they could extricate themselves from a line of action that promises little result."[72]

Indeed, the uneasiness of many of the so-called Indian moderates with the more extreme tactics of the younger Nehru and Subhas Bose, and the growing Muslim dissatisfaction with the Congress, exemplified by their decision in the Punjab to cooperate with Simon, boded well for 1928.[73] The Intelligence Bureau in New Delhi, busy opening Indians' mail, reported that Motilal Nehru had asked Gandhi to warn his son, Jawaharlal, about espousing "extreme views" of the sort the younger Nehru had expressed in an earlier letter arguing that nationalism must not lead to "an India administered by the mill-owner, the zamindar, the vakil and their kind."[74] Irwin was even then convinced that there was no need for any major concession to the Indian demonstrators, especially in regard to promises of future consultation at a Round Table Conference.[75] Yet there were also signs that Irwin had begun to realize that he must do more than he had already to prompt moderates and others aggrieved by the Congress to signal their willingness to participate with the British in framing a settlement which fell between the Montford reforms and demands for immediate Dominion Status or even independence. This did not mean a dramatic alteration in the Viceroy's plan though, but rather a logical evolution and progression of his thinking.

A large part of Irwin's problem was that, despite his hopes, even the non-Congress Indian moderates had not yet forsaken their cooperation with the party, but remained with the All Parties Conference in which Sapru took a leading role. From London, Hirtzel of the India Office argued that this proved that "the policy of 'rallying the moderates' does not pay."[76] Unwilling to accept these politicians' real affinities with the Congress, the Viceroy instead blamed their lack of political sense:

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71 Irwin to Baldwin, 27 November 1927, SB 102/164–167.

72 Irwin to Baldwin, 27 December 1927, SB 102/177–180. Irwin consistently broadcast this opinion; see, for example: Irwin to Hoare, 31 October 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/354; Irwin to Simon, 30 November 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/17/368; Irwin to Birkenhead, 8 December 1927, Mss. Eur. c.152/29; Irwin to Hoare, 3 January 1928, Mss. Eur. e.240/76; Irwin to Birkenhead, 23 February 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/29.

73 Irwin to Sir Arthur Hirtzel, 4 January 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/5; Irwin to Reading, 22 March 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/35; Irwin to Baldwin, 31 March 1928, SB 102/207–211. See also, Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 41.

74 Weekly Reports of Director, Intelligence Bureau, 26 April and 1 November 1928, L/P&J/12/292/23–29.

75 Irwin to Birkenhead, 9 February 1928.

76 Hirtzel to Irwin, 15 March 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/27.

> a good many of the middle Liberal politicians have got themselves so deeply committed on the boycott issue that it is by no means easy for them to get back. That they would like to find a way out of the dilemma between absorption in the Swarajist party on the on hand, or eating their own words on the other, I am certain, but it is not very easy.[77]

Simon had reached a similar conclusion and, as he prepared to leave India, he and Irwin had weighed the idea of inviting Indians not to join the commission, but to sit as an "allied" body which would make its own report.[78] For the Viceroy, Simon himself was another problem. Would the commission produce a report attractive enough to allow politicians to disengage themselves from the Congress without appearing to have deserted the nationalist cause?[79] Irwin could not be sure, and warned George Lane-Fox, another commissioner:

> Keep your mind as elastic as possible within what we all know to be the essential limits of the whole business, in case any opportunity offers later of reconciling any sections of Indian opinion to your existence and activities, and tell me some time how Simon is feeling about the whole thing.[80]

In the meantime, Irwin floated another idea to the Cabinet, proposing that the Royal Warrant for the Statutory Commission be amended to allow Indian representatives to be temporarily "co-opted" into the commission and to allow a separate Indian report. Irwin saw this as a harmless plan to appease ever-important Indian "sentiment," but the Cabinet, especially Birkenhead, was much opposed.[81]

In mid-summer Irwin learned that Simon favored a plan which gave full provincial autonomy, but balanced that with an indirectly-elected central legislature and a non-responsible executive, in which in any case the British held significant reserved powers. The provincial governments, furthermore, would not have control of "law and order."[82] Irwin's suspicions of Simon's ability to

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77 Irwin to Baldwin, 31 March 1928, SB 102/207–211.

78 See memorandum by Simon, "India and the Commission," 18 April 1928, copy at SB 102/214–223.

79 Irwin to Dawson, 10 April 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/47; Irwin to N. Chamberlain, 21 April 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/58.

80 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 28 May 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/92.

81 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 13 June 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/107a; Irwin to Simon, 5 July 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/120a; Irwin to Lane-Fox, 20 July 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/137a.

82 How Irwin learned of Simon's intentions is laid out in Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 22–23. Here, however, Bridge's chronology breaks down. He claims that Lane-Fox alerted Irwin of Simon's inclinations on 26 July 1928, but then paradoxically states that Irwin's efforts to

understand India on a less than analytical level, and to produce an attractive proposal, now seemed justified. He wrote Lane-Fox that such an approach was hardly an advance, and that Indians should also have responsibility for some "really important matters" in the provinces albeit "under proper safeguards" for British rule. Would Lane-Fox like to see Irwin's "preliminary ideas" on another way to structure Indian government?[83] Yet the publication of the Nehru Report did not unduly agitate Irwin. The Report was the work of both Liberals and Congressmen, but Irwin was still not convinced that this united nationalist front would hold together. And the Viceroy saw this document not as a final demand, but as a prelude to further negotiation. Moderate as it certainly was, the report was a "constructive document, even though in some respects it seems to ride lightly over obstinate facts and real difficulties."[84]

The Viceroy, nevertheless, admitted that the time had come for more direct efforts to break apart the nationalist movement. By autumn 1928, Irwin was sure that Indian political opinion was "drifting more and more leftwards."[85] He feared that the failure to do something "pretty substantial" would only exacerbate this problem, and at the same time grew even more agitated about Simon's shortcomings.[86] In December 1928, the atmosphere in India was "pretty electric."[87] However, the Viceroy, ever the optimist, soon found some encouraging signs. The All Parties Conference, meeting in Calcutta at the end of December 1928, seemed much less unified than before. Congressmen like Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Bose, though still holding out for independence, were adamant that Britain accept the Nehru Report immediately. Gandhi managed to engineer a compromise in which Britain would have until the end of 1929 to agree to the Nehru proposals. In addition to this apparent disagreement between sections of the Congress, the Calcutta conference had also provoked the withdrawal of the Muslim politician Muhammad Ali Jinnah from the all-party approach, as the Congress had refused to amend the Nehru plan to include separate Muslim electorates for national elections. Here was a situation in which the Viceroy could possibly intervene. He wrote Hirtzel, the Under Secretary of State: "I do

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amend the Royal Warrant and co-opt Indians onto the commission derived from his newfound awareness that Simon's plan was not going to attract anyone's support. As I have detailed above, Irwin attempted this in late June and early July 1928, well before the alert from Lane-Fox arrived. This is not a large point, but one which amplifies my contention that Irwin followed a more consistent line in his policy than has been supposed.

83 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 13 August 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/154.

84 Irwin to Sir Srinivasa Sastri, 20 August 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/163.

85 Irwin to the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, 6 October 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/190.

86 Irwin to Lang, 29 November 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/229; Irwin to Lord Linlithgow, 15 November 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/225; Irwin to Stonehaven, 12 November 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/219.

87 Irwin to Baldwin, 12 December 1928, SB 102/250–251.

believe that we ought to have our minds very much applied to the examination of any possibility that may offer of disrupting the rather artificial unity that at present prevails among organised Hindu political opinion."[88] Stanley Jackson, the Governor of Bengal, agreed in a letter to the Prime Minister: "The older leaders, including Gandhi + Motilal Nehru, have been virtually thrown over – + Subash [sic] Bose + the younger crowd are in the ascendant – they are the extremists ... but they will not make much headway with this crowd."[89] Irwin was most explicit in telling Baldwin: "We *must split* the present artificial unity among Hindu organized intelligentsia."[90] The Intelligence Bureau in Delhi bolstered this idea of nationalist disunity, recalling in early 1929 that Jawaharlal Nehru, for all his praise of the Indian peasant, had also written in private that "[w]e are a lazy and demoralized people, and require continual prodding."[91]

Irwin got a further boost in late January from some of the moderates whose assistance he prized: a conversation with the Liberal politician, Sir Chimanlal Setalvad, revealed that: "neither Sapru nor Motilal nor Gandhi expected or wanted full Dominion Status by either the end of this year or next year or probably for many years" and that they were willing to admit the need for some safeguards as well. Furthermore:

> [Setalvad] kept on repeating that everything could be put right by some gesture from the Home Government ... at some stage the spokesman of His Majesty's Government should make it plain that it was our object to lead India to Dominion Status and that once this had been said the ways and means of doing so would be less intractable ... I give you this for what it is worth, not so much because I feel that we are necessarily here touching anything that might offer a substantial foothold, but because it is indicative of what I more and more come to believe is true, namely, that in all quarters except the most extreme there would be very genuine relief if some face-saving device which afforded an excuse for the introduction of saner counsels could be found.[92]

Irwin put forward a three-part response to this situation.[93] In order to split "this Hindu intelligentsia," he proposed:

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88 Irwin to Hirtzel, 28 December 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/253.

89 Jackson to Baldwin, 1 January 1929, SB 103/2–4.

90 Irwin to Baldwin, 10 January 1929, SB 103/5–7.

91 Weekly Report of Intelligence Bureau, 14 February 1929, L/P&J/12/60/15.

92 Irwin to Birkenhead, 24 January 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/29; Irwin to Peel, 28 February 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/5. This "moderate" dissatisfaction with Congress tactics also appeared in intelligence reports: Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 10 January 1929, L/P&J/12/367/9–12.

93 Irwin's plotting in the first half of 1929 has received extensive coverage from Moore and Bridge. This account will highlight the most important events of that period only. See

> to go forward and saddle them with real responsibility. Here, history, I suspect contains a lesson. I don't think we should have had the Moslems with us at present without the [Montford] Reforms. It has been a struggle for power that has resulted in them so hating their Hindu brethren that they almost love us.[94]

If it were possible, he would favor the devolution of certain areas of responsibility onto Indians while "keeping control of essentials."[95] The key to wooing Indians away from the Congress extremists was "introducing an element of responsibility at the centre."[96] Moreover, the British Government should not impose any specific scheme for reform, but instead invite Indians to London to discuss various proposals. Irwin saw that the recent completion of Sir Harcourt Butler's commission on the relations between the Indian government and the Indian princely states would provide a convenient pretext for calling such a conference, as the Simon Commission had not examined the role of the states in its tours of India. The conference would reconcile these reports and examine India's future in a wider context. Irwin had considered the possibility of such a conference in 1928, but only refined his ideas in early 1929.[97] Simon, then in India on his second tour, realized such a meeting would not concentrate solely on his report, or be bound to its conclusions at all, and was vehemently opposed at first. He was somewhat appeased, though, by Irwin's revised proposal, in which the Simon report would inform the British Government's submissions to the conference and Simon himself would propose the conference in a letter to the Prime Minister sometime between Simon's arrival in London and the publication of his formal report.[98] Such a step was not intended, of course, to reward Indian political evolution or to move Indians closer to sovereignty; it remained a policy governed by Irwin's belief that "we might get an adequate amount of agreement … and secure safeguards for a further transitional period that we might not be able to get with agreement 10 or 20 years hence."[99] The key was to find a way to "present this retention of control in a form that will not militate against its effectiveness and will, at the same time, have regard for Indian hypersensitive psychology."[100]

Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 41–59, and Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 25–31.

[94] Irwin to W. Ormsby-Gore, 10 January 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/264.

[95] Irwin to Davidson, 18 January 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/1929.

[96] Irwin to Lane-Fox, 14 February 1929, quoted in Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 27.

[97] See, for example, Irwin to Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, 7 April 1928, Chelwood Papers, British Library, Add. Mss. 51084/57–60.

[98] Simon to Irwin, 26 February 1929 and 14 March 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/30.

[99] Irwin to Lang, 11/29/28, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/219.

[100] Irwin to Crawford and Balcarres, 6 October 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/190.

Geoffrey Dawson, the editor of the *Times*, was himself on an extended tour of India in early 1929 and in close consultation with Irwin, a fellow Tory moderate. Dawson approved of the conference, and its less restricted agenda, as a means of disrupting what the Viceroy argued was a tenuous Indian political unity. He also saw little reason why such a format should jeopardize the "prestige" of the Simon report, noting that "[o]n the contrary there was now a risk of it falling entirely flat" and "that this was no question of giving anything away ... the Indian Const[itutio]n. was not even under discussion."[101] Upon his return to England, Dawson apprised Baldwin of Irwin's initiative. The P.M., who had learned of the Viceroy's inclinations from Irwin himself and from a recent meeting with Sir Malcolm Hailey, the dean of the Indian Civil Service, then home on leave, was, according to Dawson, "extraordinarily receptive" and "extremely sympathetic."[102] Baldwin was apparently resistant to Lane-Fox's own orientalized assessment of Irwin's position: "The Viceroy – dear good + able person as we know him to be is, I am afraid, terribly handicapped ... being always accessible to those Indian politicians who come to talk to him + are no doubt most persuasive + damnably clever."[103] Hirtzel was not so sanguine himself about the possibility of staving off a resurgence of Gandhian non-cooperation by the end of 1929, and since January of that year had urged the Viceroy to prepare contingency plans for countering such protests and keeping government working during them.[104]

What Baldwin and Dawson may not have fully realized, however, was that Irwin aimed not only to have the British Government issue a conference invitation to Indians, but to declare that the negotiations formed a part of the larger process of India's progress towards full self-government. This declaration, full of promise and grandiloquence, would signify little real change in India's status within the Empire, but this was the sort of gesture which demonstrated Irwin's intent to make "the shop window look respectable from the Indian political point of view," as he had once put it.[105] He was quite explicit about how such a maneuver might take advantage of Indian sensibilities: "The Indian habit of phrase-making is really the limit. I am convinced in my own mind, that 85 out of any 100 people who use these big words would not detect any inconsistency in some modification of the

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[101] Dawson journal "Notes of a tour in Ceylon + India," entry dated 28 February 1929, Dawson Papers, Bodleian Library, Mss. Dawson 53. See also Dawson to G.D. Brumwell (*Times*), 10 February 1929, Mss. Dawson 74/18–23; Dawson memoranda on Indian situation, March 1929, Mss. Dawson 74/57–76, 81–82.

[102] Irwin to Baldwin, 28 March 1929, SB 103/20–23; Irwin to Baldwin, 23 April 1929, SB 103/27–30; Dawson to Irwin, 3 April and 8 April 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152.18/237, 241, 243.

[103] Lane-Fox to Baldwin, 13 March 1929, SB 103/17–19.

[104] Hirtzel to Benn, 15 January 1929, L/P&J/12/325/113–117.

[105] Irwin to Stonehaven, 12 November 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/219. Irwin repeated the idea of making an attractive "shop window" to Lang on 15 April 1929, LANG 41/271–278.

policy [of "Dominion Status"] that to our minds, would make it something quite different, provided it is still called by the right name."[106] This reasoning followed from his belief in "the invincible preference of our Indian brethren for big words over logic and facts."[107] Hirtzel wrote to Irwin, reinforcing this belief, that in India "'the principle of contradiction' is not a law of thought."[108] Moreover, the Viceroy argued that it mattered more how one said things than what one said in an India where "[h]urt feelings are at the bottom of most of our troubles."[109] In arguing this, Irwin seemed to rely on the stereotypical idea of the conflicted and confused Indian "babu," a conception Irwin had used before, when describing the "paradox" of "the fact that the Indian politician passionately desires a constitution framed on the model of the West, from which, among other things, he desires to achieve his emancipation."[110] The declaration would come in a letter from the Prime Minister in response to Simon's proposal for a conference. Irwin had wavered over whether such a statement should hinge on the affirmation that India was on the path to "Dominion Status" or "Dominionhood." In late March he agreed with Simon not to use "Dominion," a phrase which implied a specific status which the Balfour committee had defined in 1926.[111] However, one month later, when neither Dawson nor Simon were in India, Irwin began to reconsider, consulting with Hailey who had just returned. Hailey saw little wrong with mentioning Dominion Status, as long as it was understood as something which could not be achieved overnight, but which would gradually evolve.[112] Irwin's legal advisors meanwhile reassured him that "Dominion Status" was practically synonymous with the "full Responsible Government" which Britain had already promised as India's ultimate destination, and, therefore, the phrase represented nothing new.[113] The Viceroy then, with Hailey as draftsman, revised the letter which the Prime Minister was to issue to include Britain's pledge "that India shall, through the realization of full responsible government, be enabled to obtain in due season recognition as a self-governing Dominion."[114] That done, Irwin left for London, to use his leave to lobby for his plan.

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106 Irwin to Reading, 18 January 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/272.

107 Irwin to Lloyd, 2 January 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/256. On his sense that Indians were "mesmerized" by "fine words and noble ideas," see Irwin to Winterton, 28 August 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/173.

108 Hirtzel to Irwin, 26 January 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/209.

109 Irwin to Dawson, 20 May 1929, quoted in Dean, "Contrasting Attitudes," p. 175.

110 Irwin to Crawford and Balcarres, 23 April 1928, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/61.

111 Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 54–56.

112 Cell, *Hailey*, pp. 162–163.

113 Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 30; Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 58.

114 Quoted in Moore, *ibid.*, p. 59.

Back in London, Irwin found the Labour Government amenable to his scheme. In fact, important figures in the Labour leadership shared, at least in part, in Irwin's impression of Indian politics and culture, if not his sense of what this meant for India's future. Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee and other influential Labour politicians, many of whom had actually visited the subcontinent, subscribed to very traditional British understandings of India as caste-ridden, politically immature and thus as yet unready for complete self-rule.[115] Unlike Irwin, however, the Prime Minister, MacDonald, and his colleagues did not view these perceived Indian limitations as either a bar to political reform or something to be exploited for British purposes. Rather, MacDonald in particular argued that while these Indian characteristics meant that political reform must be gradual and programmatic, it was both possible and the correct step in India's development.[116] Irwin thus entered his conversations with fellow Conservatives and some cautious Liberals with at least the support of MacDonald and the Cabinet, albeit one which did not govern as a majority, but only with the support of the Liberals.

The Viceroy pressed his friends in the Conservative ranks to adopt his plan for political and semantic subterfuge as well. Leo Amery recorded that the Viceroy's "view is that the governing view in Indian psychology is composed in equal parts of vanity, inferiority complex and fear of real responsibility. To meet these, what is required is some façade which will leave the essential mechanism of power still in our hands."[117] Irwin made the same argument to Neville Chamberlain who recalled that "[Irwin] believes it to be possible to 'get away with' some solution which would give the Indians a good share of autonomy in the provinces while keeping a tight hold on the essential services … [T]he situation is largely psychological + demands attention to the characteristics of the Indian viz. his vanity, his dislike of responsibility and his inferiority complex." In order to reassure doubters about his plan, Irwin stressed that his "Dominion Status" pledge was not harmful, given the "fundamental distinction between the general political thought of Great Britain and of India" which left the Indian not demanding an "achieved constitutional state," but rather a "promise of full rights in time to come."[118]

Despite some vociferous opposition from leading Conservatives, the Government agreed to Irwin's plan, empowering him on his return to New Delhi in October 1929 to make the conference invitation and the declaration that for Britain "the natural

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115 See Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India: Metropolitan Anti-Imperialism, 1885–1947* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 9–14, 78–105, 165–166; also: Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford, 1993), p. 50.

116 Carl Bridge and Howard Brasted, "The British Labour Party 'Nabobs' and Indian Reform, 1924–1931," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 17/3 (1989), pp. 396–400 esp.

117 From J. Barnes and D. Nicholson, *The Leo Amery Diaries: Volumes 1 and 2* (London, 1980–1988 (hereafter as "Amery diary") 30 July 1929, 2/48.

118 Irwin to Baldwin, 8 October 1929, SB 103/81–86.

issue of India's constitutional progress [as the 1919 reforms implied] is the attainment of Dominion status." The Viceroy believed he had achieved a breakthrough: "All the information that reaches me leads me to conclude that the predominant feeling in all circles is in favour of co-operation with the Conference. The Congress leaders … are really engaged upon the task of face-saving."[119] Irwin's Intelligence Bureau had indeed reported throughout the autumn of "apprehensions" among some in Congress over the election of Jawaharlal Nehru as the body's president and had also forecast that the party was finding some support among students, but much less among the "masses generally."[120] Perhaps playing on the image of the effeminate Hindu politician, the Intelligence Bureau also noted that Congress leaders now feared "personal assaults" by Muslims angered over party policy.[121] Irwin's confident forecast, however, was telling, especially in his justification of it as based on "all the information that reaches me." Just what information did Irwin have, and what effect did it have on his policy-making decisions? An answer to this question reveals several intriguing aspects of his Viceroyalty, and of British governance in India at large, including the complex interrelations between cultural perceptions and colonial information systems.

Irwin's approach to the nationalist challenge certainly drew on his earlier, and apparently significant, exposure to the imperial discourse which framed India and Indians in such a way as to defend British rule. This was apparent in his assessments from very early on in his tenure, including his judgment by the spring of 1926 that "sentiment" dominated Indian political thinking and that Indian grievances were more "psychological" than real. In fact, ideas about Indian immaturity, physical and moral weakness and double-dealing recurred throughout his descriptions of the situation the Raj faced and became the basis for the strategy that culminated in the 1929 declaration. The sheer volume of his reference to these beliefs about India, to all sorts of correspondents, argues against reading his choice of language simply as a strategy for convincing others to support his plan and, thus, not a true representation of his views. However, it is too simplistic to assert that cultural assumptions single-handedly drove the Viceroy's decision-making from the moment he arrived in India. Rather, Irwin's reliance on these stereotypes must be seen within the environment and context in which he worked. In the first place, there did exist some serious disagreements among Indian politicians over the course and aims of the nationalist movement, including the merits of taking office in provincial councils, the efficacy of civil disobedience and the political role of Muslims in any future Indian polity.[122] These were developments which, construed along traditional colonial lines, allowed

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119 Irwin to Benn, 6 November 1929; Irwin to Halifax, 12 November 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/27/167.

120 See Intelligence Bureau Weekly Reports, 9/26/29–11/21/29, L/P&J/12/367/30–34.

121 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 5 December 1929, L/P&J/12/368/2–3.

122 Brown, *Gandhi*, Chapters 6–7; Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter 2; Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 226–253.

British administrators to console themselves that the nationalists remained governed ultimately by their innate Indian-ness. Furthermore, the Government of India's intelligence apparatus did little to dispel such complacency or to offer complicated analyses of what was indeed a complex and highly fluid Indian scene.

A major problem lay in the sources used by and available to the Raj. Irwin and his coterie of advisers, like Hailey and Haig, did not have extensive contact with Indian politicians and activists.[123] Those they did meet often came from the small Indian professional elite, like Sapru and Setalvad, hardly a representative sample and often a problematic source. To take one example, Irwin used Setalvad's assurances to make his case that Indians would accept some "gesture," while at the same time the United Provinces government was reporting that Setalvad had met a chilly reception among his fellow Indian Liberals for "being too moderate."[124] This may also serve as a reminder of the difficulties of communicating intelligence in such an unwieldy and paper-clogged administration. By virtue of their accessibility, though, these Indian "moderates" assumed great importance as providers of information to elite colonial officials.[125] For example, in late 1929 one of Irwin's correspondents, the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, relayed some news about Gandhi to the Viceroy, assuring Irwin of its reliability: "Sapru is my authority as regards Mr. Gandhi and is quite sure about it."[126] Intelligence reports in the late 1920s themselves relied to a great degree on Indian newspapers and what correspondence they could intercept.[127] The result was often a simplistic presentation of the nationalists that sought to explain them in older and more familiar terms. In this view, Indian politics seemed destined for the inevitable division between "extremists" or "terrorists" on the Bengali model and cooperative, self-interested and fearful "moderates." Communal differences would further separate Indians and, of course, the peasantry would remain an apolitical and irrational mass. It is only in this context that one can fully understand Irwin's embrace of reliable imperial nostrums as a guide to policy. He came to India armed with certain beliefs (and a great sense of certainty about himself) and a predisposition to see Indians in a particular way. Once in New Delhi, the Viceroy encountered few obstacles to a continued reliance on these preconceptions, as Indian political developments lent themselves to a plausible, if simplistic, reading confirming these stereotypes and, significantly, as Irwin's own

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123 Tinker, *Viceroy*, p. 108.

124 UP Report, January 1929 (1/26/29), L/P&J/12/695/2.

125 Hailey dined at Sapru's home in late November 1929, for example (see Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 62).

126 Grimwood Mears to Irwin, 25 October 1929, quoted in Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 46. For another example of Mears's reliance on Sapru, see his note to Benn at the India Office in Low, *ibid.*, p. 51.

127 See Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 10 January 1929, L/PJ/12/367/9.

advisors and the administration's intelligence service provided little guidance for understanding the nationalist movement in all its complexity.

This selective reading of the Indian political situation, one which managed to survive the Simon Commission demonstrations and boycott in 1928, had some obvious lacunae of course. Significantly, in its preoccupation with "moderates" and "extremists," it did not account for Gandhi or for the potential of the Mahatma to operate between such political poles and thus bring many of the supposedly apolitical rural masses into effective political action. British officials were concerned as to Gandhi's actions, but had some difficulty in trying to predict them or to discern his political leanings, leading to an assessment in late 1929 that "[i]t is difficult to understand what Mr. Gandhi's real attitude is. He will not lead himself, and he admits that things are not nearly ready; but he hopes students will not 'lag behind' when the 1st of January comes."[128] In the absence of concrete information about Gandhi, and in the face of his work mainly as a mediator in Congress after 1928, the colonial administration saw him more as a religious or spiritual leader than as a political organizer or tactician. Irwin, as we have seen, already regarded Gandhi as a sort of extraterrestrial. A government "history sheet" concluded that Gandhi "commands greater influence" than other Indians "as much for his saintly and ascetic qualities as for any other reason."[129] Just as it had after Chauri Chaura, the colonial state especially saw Gandhi's popularity in rural areas as less political than mystical, motivated by "popular esteem" above all else.[130] Administrators in Madras concluded of Gandhi's visit in the spring of 1929 that his popularity was "more an indication of interest in [his] personality than of a warm espousal of his doctrines."[131]

Irwin was confident in his "Dominion Status" gambit of 1929, especially in his sense that he had identified particularly Indian characteristics that would allow for its tactical success. Indian reactions, however, were not quite what he had expected. The question remained, though, of whether they were powerful enough to cause him to adjust his thinking.

Irwin and India

As Congress pondered Irwin's declaration in late 1929 and early 1930, the Viceroy remained hopeful about the prospects for a settlement in India. His belief in the

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128 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 3 October 1929, L/P&J/12/60/36. For further analysis of British struggles with Gandhi and his thinking, see Studdert-Kennedy, *Providence & the Raj*, pp. 133–147.

129 "History Sheet" on M. Gandhi, L/P&J/12/425/2 (1930).

130 UP Report, 11 October 1929, L/P&J/12/695/19.

131 Madras Report, 17 May 1929, L/P&J/12/692/17.

power of his declaration to split apart the Congress was undiminished: "It seems clear that all the more moderate elements are now really beginning to feel the necessity of taking up the challenge of Congress and fighting them with determination," he wrote Benn in January 1930.[132] From the Punjab, the Government of India received a damning critique of the Congress meeting at Lahore in December, 1929. At this meeting, the Congress had endorsed a plan for Gandhian civil disobedience in response to the failings of the Irwin proposal. A police report on the Congress proceedings noted that:

> There can be no doubt that Gandhi has dominated and, in fact, directed the proceedings. But what a Gandhi! There has been no sign of "soul-force" or high idealism; still less of any approach to statesmanship. The mind that has been so dominant is the mind of the *bania*; chaffering; mixing dust with grain, and endeavoring to foist upon the world a patched and threadbare piece of shoddy under a covering of tinsel. As Gandhi stands exposed, so does the Congress.

This intelligence summary argued that Gandhi and the leadership had caved in to more radical elements in their party, "partly through fear of their vociferous opposition and physical hostility," and partly because of the younger Nehru's "communistic" bent. These essentialized descriptions of Congress behavior underlined the report's conclusion that the nationalists were on the verge of a major split, with "moderates" heading one way and a radical "rabble" of "ill-balanced youths" the other, while Sikhs and Muslims remained outside the movement and Gandhi found himself alone.[133] Irwin received similar sorts of advice from others as well. Reginald Craddock, formerly Governor in Burma, warned the Viceroy that the Congress, "like most Orientals," saw Irwin's declaration simply as an incentive for further negotiations and thus he advocated a program of forceful anti-Congress repression.[134] Administrators in several provinces emphasized that the new Congress strategy was causing "disquietude not only among the active supporters of Government but also those whose vested interests depend on the stability of Government but who are usually apathetic, as well as resentment among those in the party who did not wish to resign their seats

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[132] Irwin to Benn, 2 January 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6; for similar sentiments, see Irwin to Baldwin, 6 January 1930, SB 104/3 and Irwin to Halifax, 6 January 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/27/175.

[133] Punjab Report, December 1929, L/P&J/12/694/48–50. This sentiment was reinforced in the Weekly Intelligence Bureau Report, 19 December 1929, L/P&J/12/60/48–49. There was some sense though that Congress had achieved "a greater success than at one time seemed likely." Weekly Intelligence Bureau Rpt., 2 January 1930, L/P&J/12/389/29.

[134] R. Craddock to Irwin, 2 December 1929, Mss. Eur. c.152/18/317.

on local Councils."[135] The Bombay government in late January 1930 played down the significance of a Congress demonstration there that drew 30,000, arguing that most at the rally came from the "ignorant masses and particularly youthful element" who "must be impressed by demonstrations and influenced by violent speeches delivered with impunity."[136] Indeed, the recurring theme of the reports that reached New Delhi was that nationalist protestors were largely "adolescents" or "students and school boys."[137]

Furthermore, the Viceroy received notable support from "moderates" like Sapru who embraced the "Dominion Status" declaration and the promise of a conference in London, and promised that Irwin's proposal would be "welcomed by a considerable body of public men in India."[138] Yet Sapru's politics, and position, were more complicated than Irwin seemed to have imagined. By late 1929, Sapru had grasped, unlike the Viceroy, the real depth of feeling Gandhi and the Congress had created in India. He asked a colleague: "Can we honestly deny that the Congress represents the majority political party and has got a hold on [the] popular mind which we Liberals have not got and are not likely to get[?]"[139] Arguing that Indian Liberals might more profitably work with Congress, and perhaps even bring Congress to the negotiating table, Sapru declared that "there is not much room for political puritanism in such matters," and that while he still did not approve of Nehru and Gandhi's "methods," he was willing to "show a truly progressive spirit" if it would help move India further down the road to self-rule.[140] Given his own interest in making India a Dominion bound only by temporary safeguards, based on a strategy of moving constitutional reform inevitably forward, Sapru was hardly making a radical departure in these remarks.[141] Nevertheless, the Congress resolution at Lahore for full independence and active civil disobedience dismayed Sapru greatly, leaving his "faith in Mr. Gandhi's leadership and clear vision … shattered in pieces."[142] Sapru had helped arrange a meeting of the Congress leadership with Irwin in late December, before the

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135 Punjab Report, 15 January 1930, L/P&J/705/2; Bombay Report, 15/20 January 1930, L/P&J/699/2; UP Report, 12 February 1930, L/P&J/706/3.

136 Bombay Government to Home Member, New Delhi, 30 January 1930, Mss. Eur. f.150/2a/5–6.

137 Madras Report, January 1930, L/P&J/12/703/2; Central Provinces Report, January 1930, L/P&J/12/701/3.

138 Sapru to Irwin, 30 October 1929, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 123.

139 Sapru to D.G. Dalvi, 12 November 1929, Sapru Papers (microfilm), 1/D.

140 Sapru to Sir Sivaswamy Aiyer, 12 November 1929, *CSR*, pp. 126–128.

141 Sapru's strategy is outlined in D.A. Low, "Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the First Round Table Conference" in Low, ed., *Soundings in South Asian History* (Canberra, 1968), p. 299. Low sees Sapru as acting to "get the British to move down the constitutional tracks which they had fashioned elsewhere."

142 Sapru to D.G. Pole, 9 January 1930, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 134–136.

Lahore meeting, but it had solved little. The complexity of Sapru's position thus shaped the information he gave Irwin, and thus in turn affected the Viceroy's thinking. Sapru's overarching strategy hinged on moving political reform forward at a steady pace. For both pragmatic and philosophical reasons, he also wished to dissuade Congress from mass popular agitation and the attendant violence, both British and Indian, he feared would result from it. He further understood that his real political power was quite limited, especially when compared to the popularity the Congress had attained. In order to keep his way, then, Sapru had to engage in some intricate maneuvering, much of which involved his role as a sort of information broker for the British administration in Delhi. By impressing upon Irwin the rising popularity of the Congress, Sapru could keep the Viceroy focused on the growing strength of the nationalist movement, but, by simultaneously arguing that there existed a body of Indian opinion that was either discomfited by Gandhi's tactics or only following Congress for lack of other options, Sapru could prevent Irwin and his colleagues from abandoning all concession in favor of a policy of repression. As D.A. Low has put it, Sapru "knew how to exploit the political force which civil disobedience had generated in a way which would make the British take a positive step forward."[143] Sapru followed this path through the spring and summer of 1930, providing Irwin with information, but hardly acting as a disinterested analyst.

In keeping with his plan to lure Indians away from the Congress, Irwin emphasized, in a speech to the Indian Assembly at the end of January, a continued commitment to eventual Dominion Status for India. However, his efforts to control the meaning of that dangerous phrase, the suitability of which he himself had doubts, blunted his message, as he strained to assert that Dominion Status was an evolving "definition of purpose," and argued that "[n]o sensible traveller would feel that the clear definition of his destination was the same thing as the completion of his journey."[144] By the middle of March 1930, as Gandhi began the salt march that was the centerpiece of the civil disobedience campaign, it seemed that Irwin's gambit had not succeeded. Reports reached New Delhi detailing the depth of Indian participation, not only in the salt campaign, but in related efforts to boycott local officials, strike and even hold back rent.[145] By mid-May, the Governor of Bombay had conceded that he faced a "more or less overt rebellion."[146] Aspects of this renewed political agitation seemed to

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[143] Low, "Sapru and the First Round Table Conference," p. 322.

[144] See a copy of the speech at L/PO/6/2a/247–249; for Irwin's appreciation of the meaning of the 1930 Dominion Conference which defined "Dominion Status" more precisely, see Irwin to Benn, 9 January 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6.

[145] See, for example: UP Report, April 1930, L/P&J/12/706/10; Bombay Report, 5/11 May 1930, L/P&J/12/699/23–25; CP Report, April 1930, L/P&J/12/701/13.

[146] Sykes to Irwin, 21 May 1930, Mss. Eur. f.150/2a/95–104.

confound British expectations of Indian behavior. Women, peasants and even members of the urban commercial classes all participated in, and even led, these protests, in contrast to the students whom the British traditionally saw as the major agitators.[147] There had been some inkling of this even before Gandhi began his march, as, for example, a February 1930 intelligence assessment from the Central Provinces had noted almost as an aside that "Congress propaganda [has] penetrated somewhat further than was previously understood into the interior of districts."[148] In Assam, the provincial government conceded that Independence Day celebrations on 26 January "were held at more centres in the interior than were at first reported."[149] Yet the overall impression is that the nature of these new movements came as something of a surprise to British officialdom. A high-ranking intelligence official conceded of protests in Bombay "that many of the ordinary, sober and sensible businessmen seem quite prepared to continue the movement, even though ruin is staring them in the face."[150]

Irwin did realize that the Congress civil disobedience campaign promised real trouble: "I anticipate that shortly we shall be driven into two or three items of what our political Indian critics will at once label 'coercion.'"[151] By May his Government had detained Gandhi and thousands of others, and had begun reassert itself physically, and violently at times. Nevertheless, even as the protests began, Irwin still held faith that British rule could not survive through martial law, but instead in alliance with the less revolutionary elements in India. He told Davidson:

> It would of course be quite possible to lock everybody up here and institute a rigid censorship of the Press, but I can never resist the conclusion that this wouldn't last more than a year or two, and that at the end of the period you would not only be further wrong but much further back in your main task.[152]

The Governor of Bombay reported to Baldwin that Irwin was "very clear as to his policy which is to form some coherent body of opinion among the so-called moderates so that a reasonably representative deputation may attend the Round Table Conference."[153] Irwin was convinced that the Die Hard reaction had ruined his declaration's effect, and had severely damaged what might have been a successful way to isolate the Congress leadership.[154] Yet the Viceroy believed that

147 Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 291.
148 CP Report, February 1930, L/P&J/12/701/5.
149 Assam Report, February 1930, L/P&J/12/696/4.
150 Quoted in Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 293.
151 Irwin to Davidson, 25 February 1930, JCCD 190.
152 Ibid.
153 Stanley to Baldwin, 26 February 1930, SB 104/4–7.
154 Irwin to Lang, 31 March 1930, LANG 41/279–284.

the publication of the Simon Report in the late spring might do some good if it were "a good document and reasonably liberal in tone and substance."[155]

Indian political action did not cease upon Gandhi's arrest, though. In fact, through the summer of 1930, it continued at an energetic pace, growing even more violent at times, with raids on salt works in Bombay and Forest Satyagrahas in the Central Provinces.[156] The reaction of administrators in Bombay was telling, for even in this most volatile province officials struggled to put nationalist activity into some recognizable context. A real ambivalence marked the reports that reached the provincial capital, as illustrated by this judgment forwarded by a rural District Superintendent of Police in early April: "The movement on the whole appears to be gradually gaining ground, but I doubt it will receive any substantial support when it comes to the push."[157] On the one hand, support for the Congress did exist, and was in fact spreading in the countryside. In Ratnagiri, the police superintendent had had to supply his men with food and other staples, as local merchants now refused to serve agents of the Raj.[158] Gandhi continued to draw crowds throughout April and was succeeding in convincing Indian police constables and village officials to resign their posts.[159] In Bombay City, the police commissioner fumed at the end of the summer that it was "very humiliating that Congress should still exercise such influence in the city."[160]

At the same time, local officials argued that this enthusiasm could not, and would not, continue, offering two reasons consistently for this. In keeping with the idea of the apolitical Indian peasant, senior policemen and district administrators blamed outside "agitators" for infiltrating villages and sparking temporary discontent among "the ignorant masses" who did not truly comprehend their message.[161] This assessment resembled somewhat that which officials had made of the insubstantial nature of Gandhi's support, crediting his popularity to his reputation as a holy man, not as a political leader.[162] Besides arguing that Congress had only achieved a temporary victory in the countryside, Bombay authorities contended that the natural timidity of Indians, both rural and urban, would prevent

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[155] Irwin to Hoare, 24 April 1930, Mss. Eur. e.240/76/77–79. Also: Irwin to Lang, 15 April 1930, Lang Papers 41/271–278.

[156] Bombay Report, 6 June 1930, L/P&J/12/699/27; CP Report, June 1930, L/P&J/12/701/20.

[157] Bombay Police Abstract of Intelligence, 26 April 1930, MSAO XI/II/591.

[158] Bombay PAI, 3 May 1930, MSAO XI/II/616; Bombay PAI, 24 May 1930, MSAO XI/II/639.

[159] Bombay Report, 5/11 May 1930, L/P&J/12/699/23.

[160] D. Healy to G. Collins, 23 September 1930, MSAO XI/I/540–544.

[161] Bombay PAI, 17 May 1930, MSAO XI/II/622; Bombay PAI, 28 June 1930, MSAO XI/II/691; Bombay PAI, 9 August 1930, MSAO XI/II/774.

[162] See J.H. Garrett to G. Collins, 3 April 1930, MSAO III/III/106–107.

them from adhering to the nationalist cause once they realized the potential consequences of their actions. A police crackdown on activities like illegal salt-making promised immediate results. Officials in a Bombay suburb reported that even a show of force left nationalist volunteers "considerably frightened … and [likely to] scuttle off like rabbits whenever they see a Policeman." The action had provoked at least one Congress figure into "feigning illness … and not to be seen" thereafter.[163] In Ahmednagar, the police predicted a decline in protestors once they saw the "return of convicts with calloused hands as the result of rigorous imprisonment," while the provincial Special Branch noted that the prospect of longer imprisonment meant that "[j]ail is no longer courted as openly as in the first heat of the campaign."[164] A full policy of repression throughout the province would, then, solve some serious problems, at least according to these analyses. The arrest or intimidation of Congress workers and protest participants would drive outsiders from villages, and allow a return to proper, apolitical behavior there. In the cities, the crackdown would cause grave misgivings among both Congress organizers and potential followers alike. This sort of overall approach to nationalist activity, acknowledging its existence while simultaneously predicting its swift demise, marked the Bombay government's analyses, and those by officials elsewhere too. That is why administrators from other, less politically volatile places than Bombay were able to maintain more optimistic views when meeting with Irwin, and it is why, as shall soon become apparent, they became even more confident of success against the Congress in the second half of 1930.

The Simon Commission's report came out in two volumes between June 10 and June 24, 1930. In large part, the report matched the earlier predictions of those who had observed Simon and his commissioners at work. It called for responsible government in the Indian provinces, albeit with reserved powers for the British Governors. The report envisioned gradual progress towards an Indian federation of these provinces, with representatives indirectly elected from the provincial legislatures to a central assembly. However, the central executive was not to be responsible to this elected body, but instead nominated by the Viceroy or Governor-General. The troublesome phrase, "Dominion status," did not appear in the report.

British reaction to the report was both favorable and effusive. Austen Chamberlain found himself "gripped" by Simon's conclusions, and read all of the second volume in a day.[165] Dawson characterized it as "extraordinarily good – clear, sympathetic, original, and, above all, unanimous."[166] Even George V weighed in

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163 Bombay PAI, 9 April 1930, MSAO XI/II/577.

164 Bombay PAI, 9 August 1930, MSAO XI/II/780; Bombay PAI, 16 August 1930, MSAO XI/II/781.

165 A. Chamberlain to Simon, 15 June 1930, Simon Papers (Bodleian Library) Ms. Simon 64/117–118; A. Chamberlain to Simon, 22 June 1930, Ms. Simon 64/192–193.

166 Dawson to Irwin, 17 June 1930 Mss. Eur. c.152/19/80.

with a strong endorsement of Simon's conclusions.[167] Die Hards, like the ailing Birkenhead, who had feared the worst, seized on the report and declared that they would make this supreme concession to India, but could not go any further.[168] Even among the Conservative backbenchers, there was widespread agreement about the soundness of Simon's proposals and about the necessity of making the report the basis of any reform.[169] The Liberals, especially Reading, concurred.[170]

Unsurprisingly, a report which drew Conservative praise in Britain met with great hostility in India, and not just from the Congress. An Indian Liberal broadsheet likened the report to "a rather badly-cooked rice pudding, strongly flavoured with the cinnamon of die-hardism."[171] Sastri, the Indian Moderate who was in Britain at the report's unveiling, was also critical.[172] Even Irwin joined in the castigation of the report, albeit in a less confrontational tone. The Viceroy had not abandoned his earlier strategy, but he had grown concerned that Britain was in danger of losing the initiative in India. Moreover, he felt that Simon had not understood the best way to deal with the Indian sensibility. As ever, Irwin still viewed Indian political agitation with some skepticism:

> There is no doubt that Gandhi has succeeded in exciting a considerable movement, not because everybody agrees with his methods – which they don't – but because there is ... a really widespread desire for political advance, and all this takes Gandhi's action as the articulate expression of generally loosely felt desire. The attitude of hosts of middle people is: "Well, of course this is the wrong way to do it, but we do want something substantial and we don't get it unless we are tiresome, and therefore, although we disagree with his methods, we don't totally disagree with the purpose of advance that he is working to secure." It is all pretty illogical and reveals the Indian unwillingness to pass condemnations on those who at the moment seem to have the shouts of the crowd with them.[173]

Indeed, despite the setbacks of the summer, including the failure of Sapru and Jayakar to convince Gandhi to call off civil disobedience, the mass arrests the

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167 Lord Stamfordham to Benn, 6 July 1930, L/PO/6/52/53–54.

168 Birkenhead to Baldwin, 30 June 1930, SB 104/15; see also Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, p. 120.

169 Butler to M. Butler, 11 July 1930, RAB 48/744–754.

170 MacDonald to Irwin, 2 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/89.

171 Quoted in Gillian Peele, "Revolt over India," in Peele and Chris Cook, eds, *The Politics of Reappraisal 1918–1939* (London, 1975), p. 126.

172 Lane-Fox to Irwin, 2 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/90; Sastri to V.S. Ramaswami Sastri, 23 July 1930, *Sastri Letters*, p. 194.

173 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 5 May 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/63. See also Irwin to Baldwin, 13 May 1930, SB 104/11–14.

Government had eventually come to make, and the wholehearted Indian rejection of Simon's proposals, there was not a sense of inevitable defeat within the Viceroy's circle. For, even when faced with what seemed a highly organized and massively subscribed nationalist campaign, British officials noted throughout their reports the elements within Indian society that they believed remained strong enough to prevent long-term nationalist success. Indian political immaturity remained a topic of consistent attention. One Deputy Commissioner in Assam claimed that villagers had understood the Congress-sponsored Independence Day as ushering in a whole new Government.[174] Gandhi's actions "appealed to the imagination of his followers," but did not create any new sort of political consciousness.[175] Instead, rural actions, like the breaking of forest regulations and cutting down toddy palms, were the work of "deluded" peasants who were the "dupes" of Congress agitators.[176] The Punjab authorities remained concerned that "Congress agitation acting on the existing economic conditions has created in people predisposed to lawlessness a readiness to resist authority."[177] In urban parts of the same province, administrators condemned the "mentality of the modern Hindu youth," and warned that an "anarchist party" might find these students "a vast amount of pliable and inflammable material."[178] Irwin himself seemed to believe that Indians could not sustain such actions in the face of a Government crackdown, noting that "if we had beaten [protests] once, the Indian character being what it is, there would not be the same enthusiasm for early revival."[179] The likelihood of Hindu-Muslim conflict over political reform was another theme repeated throughout 1930, though often derived less from compelling evidence than from assumptions and speculation about comparatively minor incidents. One example was the Bombay police's determination that a Congress march in Ahmedabad might "in all probability" have been attacked by Muslims but for police security, an assertion not backed by any further evidence.[180] Instances of Muslim disagreement with or opposition to the Congress appeared prominently in local and provincial reports, with special attention paid to Muslim merchants' refusals to boycott foreign cloth and to incidents demonstrating a lack of Muslim participation in Congress actions.[181] When "Mohammedans" did join Congress,

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174 Assam Report, January 1930, L/P&J/12/696/3.

175 Bombay Report, 18 March 1930, L/P&J/12/699/15.

176 Bombay Report, 5/11/May 1930, L/P&J/12/699/23; Assam Report, June 1930, L/P&J/12/696/18; CP Report, July 1930, L/P&J/12/701–24–25.

177 Punjab Report, July 1930 L/P&J/12/705/36–37.

178 Punjab Report, 15 October 1930, L/P&J/12/705/59–60.

179 Irwin to Benn, 8 May 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/64.

180 Bombay Report, 5 February 1930, L/P&J/12/699/7.

181 For examples of this emphasis on continuing communal tension, see UP Report, June 1930, L/P&J/12/706/15; Punjab Report, 15 June 1930, L/P&J/12/705/29.

they came from "the more illiterate section" of the community, according to one report.[182] When some Punjabi Sikhs took part in demonstrations in Amritsar and Lahore in July 1930, the official response was to identify them as leading "chronically discontented elements" like the Virk Sikhs, "a habitually criminal and truculent class."[183] The insistence on communal tension, however, met at times with complications, as, for example, six major Muslim newspapers in Bombay found themselves split in early 1930 over Gandhi's salt march.[184]

Intelligence assessments of Congress protests helped to reinforce another colonial trope: that of the split between excitable urbanites and a solid rural peasantry. Most analyses seemed to show the expected pattern emerging, with political action succeeding mainly in the cities and large towns.[185] Reports from Western India emphasized that, apart from "Bombay City" (quite a caveat), Congress activity had not met with much success.[186] Efforts by Congress workers in rural villages throughout India seemed to have met with varying success.[187] However, an undercurrent of concern about the politics of rural India also ran through these assessments. Despite its lack of progress thus far, the Congress continued to press on with a fairly well-organized rural campaign, encouraging peasants to withhold rent, boycott merchants and break the salt laws.[188] Officials in Bombay argued that the "bulk of the population in such tracts is not politically inclined, but cannot stand out against Congress organization so long as the latter holds the field unchecked."[189] These Congress "propagandists" in the Punjab, for example, seemed to have insured that "no district" there "entirely escaped" agitation following Gandhi's arrest in May.[190] Furthermore, as Congress extended its influence and presence into the countryside, it became much harder for colonial officials "to obtain recent or reliable information," as the Assam government noted in early summer 1930.[191] The administration in the U.P. could only report that its "district officers fear that there has been some real deterioration in the

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182 Bombay Report, 21 June 1930, L/P&J/12/699/31–34.

183 Punjab Report, July 1930, L/P&J/12/705/40–41.

184 Bombay Report, 15/21 April 1930, L/P&J/12/699/21–22.

185 See, for example, UP Report, May 1930 and 28 August 1930, L/P&J/12/706/12–22; Delhi Report, 21 July 1930, L/P&J/12/702/20.

186 Bombay Report, 5 February 1930, L/P&J/12/699/7.

187 UP Report, 17 March 1930, L/P&J/12/706/5; UP Report, 23 March 1930, L/P&J/12/706/7; Delhi Report 5 May 1930, L/P&J/12/702/9; Bombay Report, 1/4 April 1930, L/P&J/699/18; Punjab Report, 15 April 1930, L/P&J/12/705/16–17.

188 UP Report, 31 March 1930, L/P&J/12/706/8.

189 Bombay Government to Viceroy, 17 January 1930, in P.N. Chopra, ed., *The Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhai Patel* (Delhi, 1993), vol. III, pp. 5–6.

190 Punjab Report, 15 and 31 May 1930, L/P&J/12/705/22–26.

191 Assam Report, June 1930, L/P&J/12/696/18.

attitude of villagers in certain parts of the province."[192] Thus, while overall those who governed India might congratulate themselves for having deprived the Congress of its leadership and for having restored some order in the cities by the fall of 1930, there remained a concern over the possibility of a nationalist "infection" of the rural masses.[193]

In July Irwin convened a meeting of all his provincial governors to assess the situation. The conference at Simla revealed the depth of nationalist sentiment throughout India, but it also very much demonstrated the conceptual limitations about the Congress held by these high-ranking administrators, some of whom were political appointees and others who were drawn from the ICS. It also revealed how deeply the murky information produced by local officials had influenced, or at least confirmed, thinking at higher levels of provincial government.[194] There was general agreement on the strength of the nationalist achievement, but marked divergence over the nature of it and the best response to it. The judgment from the Central Provinces leaned heavily on a traditional sensibility: "The popular attitude towards [civil disobedience] is semi-religious and to a considerable extent ignores considerations of personal loss. Women and children are taking an enthusiastic part in it, and owing to the terror of social boycott few non-official leaders have the courage to come forward on the side of Government."[195] While protest was spreading "into the villages," in the C.P., however, the U.P. Governor reported that "in his province as elsewhere the movement is mainly urban and Hindu," and that "District Officers … are not seriously concerned at present" about rural agitation.[196] From Bengal, Madras and the Punjab came more reassuring news of a movement "on the decline." The most forceful and organized presentation to the Viceroy came from Bombay, where the situation seemed most grave and the local Governor, Sykes, somewhat more attuned to what he faced. Sykes had taken pains in the weeks before the Simla conference to challenge Irwin's sense that Congress did not have a hold on all India and that it might be successfully "isolated."[197] At the conference, Sykes stressed the rural and urban nature of Congress activity in Bombay and argued that Bombay was not

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192 UP Report, July 1930, L/P&J/12/706/20.

193 CP Report, July 1930, L/P&J/12/701/26–27; for other examples of the prevalence of the notion that Congress outsiders had "infected" or "corrupted" villagers, see Bombay PAI, 6 September 1930, MSAO XI/II/825; Central Provinces PAI, 24 May 1930, MSAO XI/III/924.

194 For an example of how an analysis of village agitation as inspired by Congress agents moved from the local to the provincial level and beyond, compare the Bombay Presidency police reports and the fortnightly provincial reports for October and November 1930. See Bombay PAI, 25 October 1930, MSAO XII/II/247–248.

195 Report of Viceregal Conference, 23 July 1930, Mss. Eur. f.150/2b/244–247.

196 Ibid.

197 Sykes to Irwin, 4 July 1930, Mss. Eur. f.150/2b/148–150.

a "special" case, but instead differed from other provinces in terms "of degree rather than of kind," and thus demonstrated what would happen elsewhere were dramatic steps not taken by the Government. Accordingly, he pressed for greater executive powers to restrain the press and seize Congress property, among other things.[198] Sykes sustained his demand for such powers through September, until Irwin granted them at last.[199] Despite Sykes's efforts to gain more authority to crack down on Congress, Irwin for some reason believed that the Bombay Governor had himself been dragging his feet and was only "at last taking pretty definite action;" to Irwin, Sykes was "a funny fellow … apt to get lost in dialectics and logical conundrums with himself that seem to act as a check upon positive action."[200] This conference, in the end, not only demonstrated the degree of concern the Congress had raised among colonial governors, but also showed the uncertainty and diversity of opinion about the nationalists among these men. For the Viceroy, there was certainly enough from this conference to sustain his confidence in his own strategy for India, and a concurrent belief that, Sykes's case notwithstanding, Bombay remained an isolated case.

Still convinced that he might still split apart any nationalist unity by playing on the "Indian mind," Irwin began work in mid-1930 on a "dispatch," a document in which the Government of India would respond to Simon and offer an alternative solution for the central legislative assembly. This plan, which called for elected Indian ministers for certain departments at the center, was published in late September 1930, but, as we shall see, soon became irrelevant to the Round Table Conference. Irwin's more immediate concern in June 1930, though, was to reassert publicly the British desire for India's eventual attainment of some form of Dominion Status. He found the MacDonald Government receptive to the idea of a statement in Parliament which, while not guaranteeing the creation of Dominion constitution at the upcoming Conference (thus causing a "volcanic" Tory reaction), would at least "define the work of the Conference more closely and ... remove some of the misconceptions which have gathered round it – at least in this country."[201] The statement would re-affirm "my statement of last year, and make it plain that the liberty of the Conference will be complete."[202] In arguing for this approach, Irwin acknowledged that "beneath all the froth and unreality … we are facing what is at bottom a national movement," and that using abstract phrases about Indian status would help solve the "great problem" of "how to keep a contented India within the Empire."[203]

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198 Report of Viceregal Conference, 23 July 1930, Mss. Eur. f.150/2b/244–247.

199 Sykes to Irwin, 8 September 1930, Mss. Eur. f.150/2b/214–215.

200 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 12 October 1930, Mss. Eur c. 152/19/152.

201 Irwin to Hoare, 23 June 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/94.

202 Irwin to Dawson, 28 June 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/98.

203 Irwin to Hoare, 10 June 1930, Mss. Eur. e.240/76/83–87.

From his first reading of the report, Irwin had identified two flaws in Simon's proposal. The most glaring was the total lack of reference to Dominion Status, even in the most watered-down version: "with safeguards" and to be implemented at some future time. In his constant correspondence with Benn, the Viceroy lamented Simon's "sad lack of imagination," his refusal to be "slightly less logical," and added "You and I know how large this slogan, as I have called it, looms in the Indian mind."[204] Irwin also had little confidence in the report's call for an elected assembly without a responsible executive. On this point he approached Simon directly, though without the vigor with which he described Simon's plan to others.[205] Though Irwin wished to reserve some subjects to British control, he saw Simon's plan as nearly unworkable: "How does he suppose that any Executive Government labeled *strong* will in fact get its business through an elected Assembly of 280 with something like 15 or 17 official votes only?"[206]

Irwin's proposal for the parliamentary statement, and his proffered draft for it, arrived in London in mid-June. MacDonald, anxious to keep all-party unity and to restrain his own left-wing, consulted with the other party leaders.[207] The major sticking-point for the Liberals and Conservatives who met with the Prime Minister on June 26 was Irwin's draft which affirmed the freedom of the conference, as well as Irwin's declaration that "the natural issue of India's constitutional progress ... was the attainment of Dominion Status."[208] Austen Chamberlain, with Reading's agreement, argued that the draft "reintroduced what I had always felt to be the very dangerous phrase 'dominion status' and it put that subject forward as the basis of the Conference ... the Simon Report must be the basis of discussion."[209] Chamberlain further warned Benn that "he thought it was possible to persuade the Conservative Party to accept [Simon's] findings, although there were those who considered that, in some respects, Simon and the Commissioners went too far."[210] For Irwin's supporters in the Tory party, this was an awkward moment. Most uncomfortable was Baldwin. On June 24 he had faced a Conservative Party meeting to deal with the vexed question of tariff reform, an issue which had arisen again as Beaverbrook fumed over Baldwin's dilatory approach. Although Baldwin had been able to secure a majority of the

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204 Irwin to Benn, 22 May 1930 and 19 June 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6. See also Irwin to Hoare, 10 June 1930, Mss. Eur. e.240/76/83–87.

205 Irwin to Simon, 17 June 1930, Mss. Simon, 64/139–142.

206 Irwin to Ormsby-Gore, 18 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/111b; Irwin to Linlithgow, 4 August 1930.

207 Bridge and Brasted, "British Labour Party 'Nabobs,'" pp. 396–412, esp. p. 397.

208 Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 108–109.

209 Chamberlain memorandum, 27 June 1930, AC 22/3/27.

210 Benn to Irwin, 27 June 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6.

meeting for his policy of a referendum on tariffs, it had not, as Stuart Ball has noted, been a total success. Baldwin, in a tactic he would use to great advantage again regarding Indian policy, was able to transform the party debate into one of confidence in his leadership and resentment against the tactics of Beaverbrook and Rothermere. Amery reflected that many had no choice but to support their leader, for anything else "looked like a vote of no confidence in S.B."[211] With the continuation of pro-tariff agitation in the local Conservative constituencies, Baldwin was still not on safe ground; intra-party dispute over the scope of the upcoming Round Table Conference could hardly help him. He responded with a characteristic attempt to defuse the potential crisis.[212]

Baldwin's first move was to ask Benn to convey Chamberlain's and Reading's view to Irwin. Irwin responded energetically: "It will be a great mistake to underrate the force of the present nationalist feeling and I think that we ought not to ignore the fact that every day makes it more certain that the real problem is going to be how to keep a contented India within the Empire." The Viceroy argued strongly that further repression would only drive away potential moderates, and that the proposed statement hardly promised that the conference would produce a dominion constitution.[213] However, many in Westminster were growing even more suspicious of Irwin's actions, as news circulated of his attempts to negotiate with Gandhi through Indian intermediaries, and as reports of the Government of India's dissatisfaction with the Simon report appeared in the *Times* and the *Observer*.[214] A meeting of the Tory Shadow Cabinet revealed that Austen Chamberlain was not alone in his opposition. The gathering, including both Chamberlains, Salisbury, Hailsham, Churchill, Peel, Hoare and Baldwin, resolved to accept a free conference but would not agree to any "form of words which implied that the Conference would meet to devise a Dominion Constitution."[215] When Reading proposed compromise language for the parliamentary statement, somewhat de-emphasizing the "Dominion" question, Baldwin, with Austen Chamberlain present, could not accept it.[216] The Prime Minister seemed to understand the Tory leader's difficulty: "[He] is completely overcome by the opposition of his Party and his immediate

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211 Amery diaries, II/74, 24 June 1930. See Ball, *Baldwin and the Conservative Party*, pp. 89–92. Also, Headlam diary, p. 189, 24 June 1930 and A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 30 June 1930, AC 5/1/508.

212 For an example of pro-tariff resolutions, see the one passed in July 1930 by the City of London CA, Westminster Central Library Archives, 487/28, AGM, 22 July 1930.

213 Irwin to Benn, 28 June 1930, copy at SB 104/119–123.

214 Dawson to Simon, 30 June 1930, Mss. Simon 65/32; see Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 245–247; Simon to Dawson, 30 June 1930, Mss. Simon 65/39–41; Simon to Professor Reginald Coupland, 1 July 1930, Mss. Simon 65/49–52.

215 A. Chamberlain memorandum, 1 July 1930, AC 22/3/29.

216 Chamberlain memoranda, 2 July 1930, AC 22/3/30–33.

counsellors, every one of whom appears to be opposed to your position ... It is quite evident that he would like to help, but that he is tied up, and we cannot expect an independent lead from him."[217] A Tory M.P. told the Viceroy that opposition within the party was not simply confined to its inner-most circles: "[T]here is a widespread feeling in the constituencies, and especially in the local associations, that Baldwin has been too timid, weak and pacifist. There has been a general swing to the right throughout the Tory Party, not merely in a protectionist direction, but all along the line."[218]

Although Irwin soon gave up any hope of securing an uncontested statement of British intentions at Westminster, he offered a backup plan: he would make a similar statement himself to the Indian central assembly. Baldwin, with some prodding from the elder Chamberlain, notified the Viceroy that "we cannot ourselves accept any responsibility for repetition at this stage of [the] words Dominion Status."[219] To Benn, Baldwin appeared "tired and may be disheartened at the campaign which is being waged against him, and I think undoubtedly Austen spoke for the rank and file of the [Tory] Party ..."[220] Irwin remained determined to make his statement and to keep the Conference totally free in its discussion: "The suggestion that Simon's Report is to be treated as gospel, which it is profane to criticise, seems to me perfectly ludicrous and ... to reduce the Conference to a perfect farce."[221] When the party leaders met again on 7 July, Chamberlain was highly agitated by Irwin's obstinacy. He gave MacDonald the choice of telling Parliament that the Simon Report would still form an important part of the Conference, or else face a hostile motion from both the Tories and Liberals.[222] Baldwin remained cautious and supportive, while MacDonald pledged to think over his options. On 9 July Irwin made his statement, an affirmation to his Indian audience that his declaration of 1929 "was made and stands."[223]

As the Viceroy moved in the summer and early autumn of 1930 to sustain his particular approach to the nationalists, he found some plausible reinforcement for his course. Irwin continued to "believe that, underneath all the shouting and the

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217 MacDonald to Irwin, 2 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/89.

218 Ormsby-Gore to Irwin, 3 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/91a.

219 See Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 112–113; Baldwin to Irwin, 4 July 1930, copy at SB 104/124–127 and L/PO/6/52/63–68. Lane-Fox thought that Chamberlain himself had written the telegram to Irwin for Baldwin, see Lane-Fox to Irwin, 2 August 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/109.

220 Benn to Irwin, 4 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6.

221 Irwin to Benn, 5 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6; Irwin to Baldwin, 6 July 1930, copy at SB 104/138–141.

222 A. Chamberlain memorandum, 7 July 1930, AC 22/3/41; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 7 July 1930, AC 5/1/509.

223 Copy of Irwin speech at SB 104/134–136.

froth, there is a great deal of [Indian] opinion which is essentially moderate in the sense that it will be prepared to face practical facts if once it can be satisfied on matters of Indian self-respect."[224] By October, he could confide to Lane-Fox: "The Congress are not a very happy family, and there is a good deal of underground resentment at Gandhi & Co. having refused to be more reasonable."[225] To Irwin, the major concern of most Indian politicians was a reform of "status," not the complete transfer of power. Those in Britain should, he wrote, appreciate that "dealing with the Indian mentality is rather like riding a young horse, some of whose antics are the result of youth rather than vice."[226]

Information from a variety of sources allowed the Viceroy to remain firm in his views. Reports provided certainly enough detail to demonstrate that Indian politicians were reverting to type – or at least enough detail to convince minds already predisposed to read Indian behavior in particular ways. In August 1930 the Bombay administration passed the following news on to Irwin regarding a recent Congress meeting:

> Resolutions passed by Working Committee read as though Congress leaders were determined to press civil disobedience campaign with unabated energy. Secret information however of what passed at meeting believed on whole reliable and supported by hints from other quarters suggests that majority of Committee were lukewarm … But younger less known men practically led Committee towards extremism.[227]

Among official opinion, the consensus was that repression had served to remove the most influential layer of Congress organizers from political activity, leaving the younger, inexperienced and more impetuous members with a responsibility they could not handle. More inclined towards violent agitation, they possessed the ability both to discredit the movement as a whole and to alienate nationalist supporters who blanched at such tactics. Colonial assessments of student protests credited their "intensely revolutionary and lawless spirit" to the rhetoric of Nehru, Bose and others who had found "dupes" in India's schools and colleges, and to a host of inflammatory material imported from abroad, including especially histories of the Irish nationalist struggle.[228] The discovery of a cache of Irish revolutionary literature among the possessions of the young Bengalis who had raided the Chittagong Armory in April 1930 likely furthered the belief that

224 Irwin to Halifax, 27 August 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/27/208; Irwin to Lang, 25 July 1930, LANG 41/285–287.

225 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 12 October 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/152.

226 Irwin to Benn, 22 October 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6.

227 *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhai Patel*, vol. III, pp. 5–6.

228 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 27 February 1930, L/P&J/12/60/52–53.

the younger nationalists remained too impressionable and excitable to sustain what Gandhi and Nehru had begun.[229] In the UP, indications were that the "type of Congress volunteer has also deteriorated, being now largely represented by out of work tenants and other persons of even lower status, brought in from the villages. A disquieting feature is the growing tendency towards violence and the defiance of authority." The result was the increasing wariness of "the more moderate politicians, who are getting somewhat impatient of Congress bravado and intransigence."[230] This sentiment echoed reporting from earlier in the summer in the Central Provinces, where police in one district argued:

> There is not a single sincere leader in Chanda. Each has an axe to grind. Kushal Chand thinks about his presidency of the municipality and the pleaders have the impending District Elections very much in their minds. No one is really desirous of going to jail.[231]

A related theme in intelligence reporting was the growing restiveness of Indian cloth traders who were beginning to feel the real financial pinch of the Congress-led hartals or boycotts – what one Punjab official termed "the tyranny of picketing."[232] These assessments, however, remained speculative, as hopes of a traders' backlash against the Congress failed to materialize and cloth shops remained mostly closed in cities like Amritsar and Nagpur in late 1930 as well as in Bombay where the Government was eagerly alert to any sign at all of merchant frustration.[233] Adherence to the boycott was not necessarily a political act though, according to British officials who regarded it instead as proof of the weakness of Indian character and of the overly sentimental nature of Indian sociability. The Punjab CID argued that merchants in Amritsar and Lahore mostly feared ostracism and "social boycott" if they defied the Congress, a conclusion which mirrored that of the central Indian Intelligence Bureau, which had produced a memorandum in the spring of 1930 on "The Methods of Social Boycott" and its effectiveness in insuring merchant adherence to nationalist demands.[234]

By the end of 1930 then, the Government of India and the India Office had received a slew of intelligence reports, many of which emphasized the scale and scope of nationalist activity, but, equally important, also stressed the instability

229 Intelligence Bureau Report, 17 April 1930, L/P&J/12/389/39.

230 UP Report, September 1930, L/P&J/12/706/24.

231 Central Provinces PAI, 31 May 1930, MSAO XI/III/933.

232 Punjab Report, 31 July 1930, L/P&J/12/705/40–41. See also Assam Report, September 1930, L/P&J/12/696/31 and Delhi Report, 18 September 1930, L/P&J/12/702/26.

233 Healy to Collins, 14 October 1930, MSAO XII/I/49.

234 Intelligence Bureau Report, 8 May 1930, L/P&J/12/289/44; Intelligence Bureau Report, 4 September 1930, L/P&J/12/368/18–19.

of the movement, its inherent weaknesses and its dim prospects for long-term sustainability. Sykes, the Governor in Bombay, exemplified this sentiment in December 1930 when he told Irwin that "[o]ur opponents are suffering from war weariness" and that a successful Round Table Conference in London might prove enough to "detach sufficient Moderates from the Congress to render them incapable of causing really serious trouble."[235] The Viceroy had also heard similar assessments from his closer circle of advisers and contacts. As Gandhi began his salt march, Hailey confirmed "absolutely" to the Viceroy that the "general attitude" in India was that the march was the work of a "light-headed old man," one who provoked "grief or amused tolerance," not political loyalty.[236] In writing to the India Office later that spring, Irwin argued that "it is possible that Hailey is right, who takes the view that the psychology of these movements resembles the psychology of the nerve storm, which reaches its apex and then declines."[237]

Irwin also maintained a consistent correspondence with Sapru, who urged "quickening the execution of constructive policy" to enable success at the Round Table Conference and thus limit the appeal of Gandhi.[238] The Indian lawyer also expressed his frustration over the failure of the British to heed his advice, especially over what he saw as New Delhi's confrontational posture towards the nationalists, one he characterized as "victory first and conciliation afterwards." Moreover, he resented the Government's treatment of the Indian Liberals: "My own feeling is that the Government recognize us as a party only when we are on any question in agreement with them, otherwise we are dismissed as a party with no influence and no backing."[239] Sapru also noted his own dislike of the Simon Report, arguing that "if the establishment of Dominion Status is left to an indefinite future, Government cannot expect such a policy to be supported by even the moderates in India."[240] Irwin did not always think highly of Sapru, but it is instructive to note that after the latter's rejection of the Simon plan, the Viceroy did mount his campaign of June and July 1930 to allay directly Indian concerns that Simon's would be the last word on the subject of Indian Dominionhood. Irwin also seemed to take seriously Sapru's protests over the colonial administration's repressive policies, and argued to the India Office that such measures were "alienating a great deal of non-Congress Hindu sympathy from the Government … In such temper it is, in our view, of great importance to give positive evidence that repression is not the sole policy of the Government but that desire to assist

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[235] Sykes to Irwin, 23 December 1930, in *Collected Works of Sardar Vallabhai Patel*, III/154–158.

[236] Irwin to Dawson, 17 March 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/30.

[237] Irwin to Benn, 8 May 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/64.

[238] Sapru to Irwin, 20 April 1930, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 141–142.

[239] Sapru to Irwin, 31 May 1930, *Ibid*, pp. 144–145.

[240] Sapru to Irwin, 12 June 1930, *Ibid*, pp. 146–147.

the constitutional development remains unimpaired."[241] Sapru's advice, whether calculated or sincere, thus reinforced Irwin's own confidence about his strategy and kept the prospect of constitutional reform very much alive. Of course, both the Indian and the Viceroy were not simply exchanging views; each approached this relationship with a tactical sensibility as well. For example, when Sapru and Jayakar approached Irwin in July 1930 for permission to speak with the imprisoned Nehrus and Gandhi, in the hope of getting them to attend the upcoming London conference and call off civil disobedience, the Viceroy acquiesced. He decided that "I shall probably give them permission and risk being cursed a bit in England, for I am sure that our game must be to try to drive as many wedges as we can between those who are at bottom inclined to be reasonable and those who are not, but a good many say that Motilal would be reasonable."[242] Irwin told Simon that he did not "anticipate much result" from Sapru's effort, but that he would happy if it simply served "to excite some public disapprobation of the attitude of these imprisoned leaders."[243] For their part, Sapru and Jayakar sought to use this intermediary role not just to talk to these three Congress leaders, but to create a push for even broader discussions with other nationalist figures over attendance at the Round Table meetings. Sapru believed that "the Viceroy is prepared to go very far with us," to which Jayakar agreed, noting that he and Sapru had been able to use their visits to New Delhi or Simla (the Viceregal summer retreat) to good effect.[244] Such personal contact, according to Jayakar, allowed them to "lighten" the "odious colours in which the picture must have been painted to him [of nationalist agitation in places like Bombay]," and thus he implored Sapru "to keep before you the desirability of seeing the Viceroy personally whenever important concessions are to be obtained from him."[245] Although Gandhi and the Nehrus remained opposed to calling off protest actions and to attending a conference that promised no change for India up front, Sapru and Jayakar had through their efforts established themselves as intermediaries and negotiators between the Government and the Congress, a role that allowed them access to, and gave them some influence within, the corridors of power in India.

Sapru, Jayakar and the other members of the Indian delegation, including representatives of the Indian Princes, sailed from Bombay in September for the first Round Table Conference. Sapru was not entirely optimistic of what he might accomplish, though, noting to Jayakar that recently in Bombay, "you and I were immortalized together by being burnt in effigy."[246] The Congress newspaper there

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241 Irwin to Benn, 28 June 1930, copy at SB 104/119–123.

242 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 14 July 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/107.

243 Irwin to Simon, 1 August 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/121.

244 Sapru to Jayakar, 12 July 1930, Sapru Papers (microfilm), SP 1/J.

245 Jayakar to Sapru, 6 August 1930, SP 1/J.

246 Sapru to Jayakar, 16 September 1930, SP 1/J.

accused the two men of "a shameful betrayal of the Nation" along the lines of "the Irish parallel."[247] The start of these negotiations, however, saw an unexpected development that dramatically altered the entire basis of the British government's approach to Indian nationalism. On the voyage to Britain, the representatives of the larger Indian Princes, who feared that further reform might jeopardize their very existence, had agreed with Sapru to seek a plan for a federal India which would allow the Princes to retain their autonomy, and which the gradualist Sapru saw as a necessary first step towards full self-rule. Once in London, this group toiled throughout October 1930 to hammer out an agreement in principle between the princely representatives and the other Indian delegates. The proposal was announced on 10 November, the first day of the conference.[248] The key elements in the plan included autonomy for the Indian provinces, a central federal legislature that included both provincial and princely representatives, and the reservation of certain powers to the Viceroy. To Sapru, this scheme appeared most likely to "give us the Status of a Dominion, subject to safeguards as to the Army and the Foreign Policy," and even those reservations would only be "temporary."[249] Malcolm Hailey was also in London, acting as a conference adviser for the India Office, and he notified Irwin that this new federal proposal might just provide enough reform to draw Indian opinion away from the Congress:

> If the movement of the Princes can be guided on to really useful lines, there is something of real substance behind, because if we could obtain a Federal Assembly in which they were well represented, and in which the Viceroy would have a wide nomination in order to discharge his responsibilities to Parliament, then we should all of us be prepared to go much further in the way of responsible Government than we should if matters took their ordinary line in development of the proposals of Simon or the Government of India. As I suggested to a friend the other day, the proposal may possibly be merely a good red herring, but, if we are lucky, it may actually turn out to be a good fishable salmon.[250]

As Sapru and others in his delegation made the rounds of the political elites in London to promote an Indian federation, they found at least tentative approval and encouragement from all three political parties. However, the Indians at the Conference were not able to agree on some key issues, especially the question of communal representation at both the provincial and federal levels. The conference closed on 19 January 1931, with a statement from MacDonald promising responsibility at the

[247] *Bombay Congress Bulletin*, 3 October 1930, MSAO XII/I/38–40.

[248] Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 73–91.

[249] Sapru to P.N. Sapru, 19 November 1930; Sapru to B.N. Gurtu, 27 November 1930, both in *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 157–161.

[250] Hailey to Irwin, 14 November 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/20/166a.

center in India, with some agreed safeguards and with a communal settlement to be imposed by Parliament after some investigation. Sapru, upon his return to India, confided to a colleague that the federal scheme held real promise for long-lasting political change, provided Indians did not let on just what they really hoped to achieve, including the transformation of politics in the princely states:

> the most serious obstacle will be the attitude of the Congress towards the Indian States … If only our politicians will show more patience they can bring about the desired changes in the position of the subjects of the Indian states within the next few years, but if they play into the hands of the "champions" of the states' subjects I am afraid we may wreck the whole ship.[251]

Irwin embraced the resolutions of the conference: "I shall be surprised if the net result is not to deflect from Congress the support of a good many of the elements, notably the commercial, who have been tacitly, but materially, assisting their campaign."[252] Irwin's only concern was that the federation might not come quickly enough to keep "our Moderate friends" as reliable allies; again relying on standard ideas about Indian political character, the Viceroy hoped that delay would not "weaken the fibre and morale of those on whom we have to rely if Congress decides to continue the fight."[253] The timing of the new federal proposal seemed propitious, in fact. For although violence had erupted in certain parts of India late in 1930 and early in 1931, incidents like the attack on the Bengal Secretariat in Calcutta in December were likely, according to some in the Indian administration, to draw less "extreme" people away from the Congress cause. During a visit to Calcutta, just after the Secretariat attack, Irwin heard from Tegart, the provincial head of intelligence, the rather remarkable assessment that "apart from the terrorist business, the state of Calcutta is … not only normal but almost healthy."[254] Other episodes of violence in early 1931, including the murder in Lahore of the wife of a District Officer by a Sikh who claimed ties to Congress, and attacks on policemen in Allahabad, did not shift the colonial government from its plan to release many in the Congress leadership so as to capitalize on the return of the Round Table representatives.[255] In the eyes of agencies like the Punjab Special Branch, these violent acts demonstrated Indian political immaturity and, in a larger sense, the inability of the Congress to form or control

251 Sapru to G.S. Bajpai, 14 March 1931, SP 1/B.

252 Irwin to Lang, 20 January 1931, LANG 41/294–298; also see Irwin to Benn, 1 January 1931, L/PO/1/49/165–171.

253 Irwin to Hailey, 2 February 1931, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/260.

254 Irwin to Dawson, 13 December 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/218.

255 UP Report, January 1931, L/P&J/12/718/2; Punjab Report, 15 January 1931, L/P&J/12/717/2.

an effective national movement. The accused Sikh was, they argued, "typical of many others who have imbibed the teachings of Congress." Furthermore:

> It was inevitable that raw uneducated country youths, whose natural instincts lead them to violence, once caught in the maw of the Congress would not be able to appreciate the subtlety of non-violence; nor would they be able to distinguish as metaphorical the numerous admonitions they had received to "jump into the battle and die for their country."[256]

Even in Bombay, where nationalist activity had been widespread and sustained, colonial officials in districts like Surat and Broach at least hinted at the possibility of some cracks in the movement, noting that some agriculturalists were "growing weary of the no-tax campaign" and would gladly "pay up their land revenue were it not for the influence of outside agitators."[257] Predictions of Indian reluctance to carry on nationalist activity, with its concomitant physical, social and economic demands, thus informed Irwin's decision to free the Congress leadership in late January 1931, and to undertake a series of meetings with Gandhi to discuss a possible end to civil disobedience and the participation of Congress at the next London Round Table conference. Provincial assessments noted that these negotiations had attracted the attention and hopes of "thoughtful" or "politically-minded" Indians who did not wish to see "the intransigence of the left wing of the Congress prevail."[258] Again, Sapru and his colleagues functioned as organizers and intermediaries for the talks between Gandhi and Irwin that stretched into early March. Gandhi's willingness to sit down with the Viceroy was not a sign of surrender nor an admission that the Congress was breaking apart, no matter what those who administered the Raj thought. As Judith Brown has put it, Gandhi saw a truce as simply "the best strategy whereby Congress could retain its unity," regroup and consider some new approaches.[259] For his part, Irwin believed he had a chance to undermine the nationalists, so long as he knew just how to approach Gandhi: discussion with the Mahatma was "not a matter of argument but purely of managing to touch [Gandhi's] heart."[260] In this regard, Irwin believed that "I think I understand enough of his character to realize that nothing is impossible if one can only manage to touch the right note."[261]

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256 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 22 January 1931, L/P&J/12/390/22.

257 Bombay Report, 15/25 February 1931, L/P&J/12/711/10.

258 UP Report, February 1931, L/P&J/12/718/4; Assam Report, February 1931, L/P&J/12/708/5.

259 Brown, *Gandhi*, p. 247.

260 Irwin to Lane-Fox, 16 February 1931, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/273.

261 Quoted in *Gandhi*, p. 248.

The Irwin-Gandhi negotiations of early 1931 demonstrated, among other things, the Raj's particular, and at times contradictory, efforts to understand or locate this complicated Indian politician within existing colonial terms of reference and taxonomies. Gandhi was, after all, a London-educated lawyer and politician who drew huge crowds, yet simultaneously a dhoti-clad ascetic who spun cotton and quoted both the Gita and Leo Tolstoy. While this was not a figure whom the British might pigeonhole as a "babu," it was one who they did try to place as a sort of Eastern mystic. By seeing Gandhi as a religious or spiritual figure, the colonial state managed both to explain his popularity and to marginalize him at the same time. In this view, Gandhi's success rested on the overheated religiosity of Indian Hindus, not necessarily on his ability to raise the political consciousness of the Indian masses. In essence, according to the colonial worldview, Gandhi had to be a religious figure, not just because of his own personal spirituality and vocabulary, but since Indians would not follow someone in such numbers for any other reason at all. An Intelligence Bureau "history sheet" on Gandhi from 1930 had concluded that he did have "greater influence" than other Congress politicians, but that this was "as much for his saintly and ascetic qualities as for any other reason."[262] Other officials shared this view, with one stressing to Irwin during the salt protests "the religious character of Gandhi's movement in popular estimation."[263] The devout Anglican Irwin also relied upon this characterization of Gandhi and of the movement he led, writing just after the negotiations that "round this civil disobedience and this strange ascetic leader of it is wrapped a whole heap of sentiment, nationalism, general business, national pride and many more motives that I do not precisely analyze."[264] Despite the prevalence of the Gandhi-as-mystic sentiment, though, there did exist another framework for understanding him among some in colonial ruling circles: that of caste and region – Gandhi as *bania*. In this formulation – one which we have already seen in an assessment of the 1929 annual Congress meeting – Gandhi appeared as no more than a grasping or double-dealing Gujarati merchant, though in reality he was of higher-caste Khatri origins, his father having been an advisor to Indian princes.[265] Reports that tied Gandhi to Indian commercial interests in March 1931 asserted that the "capitalists behind [him] will insist on calling the tune" and that even Jawaharlal Nehru was wary of Gandhi's connections to businessmen.[266] Lord Willingdon, who succeeded Irwin as Viceroy in April 1931, resisted his predecessor's theological approach and instead regarded Gandhi as an "astute

262 DIB History Sheet, L/P&J/12/425/2.

263 Irwin to Dawson, 7 April 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/45.

264 Irwin to Linlithgow, 13 March 1931, Mss. Eur. c.152/19/289.

265 Sykes to Willingdon, 12 November 1931, Mss. Eur. f.150/3b/198–200.

266 Reports on Congress activity, March 1931, L/P&J/7/80.

little political bania" and a "slippery little devil."[267] Even Irwin adopted this view at times, once calling Gandhi "a relentless bargainer."[268]

The pact agreed between Gandhi and the Viceroy in early March 1931 was the highlight of Irwin's final few weeks in office. The agreement mandated the release of all remaining Congress prisoners and an inquiry into land revenue demands on the Government of India's part, in exchange for which Gandhi called off the Civil Disobedience campaign. Both sides emphasized that these negotiations had produced simply a truce, not a permanent settlement, and officials warned that Congress would use this period of calm to regroup and prepare for "the probable continuance of the struggle."[269] Nevertheless, Irwin regarded the pact with pride as a mark of real progress and a confirmation of his approach to the nationalists. He returned to London in May 1931 to substantial acclaim and an effusive reception.

Although the Gandhi-Irwin agreement did not last the year, overall Irwin's eventful tenure as Viceroy proved fundamentally important in shaping future British approaches to the nationalists. In promoting the idea of a Round Table Conference, and then persuading at least some Indian politicians to participate in it, Irwin helped to create the forum from which the notion of a federal India emerged. The federation scheme of 1930, mooted at the Conference, became the basis not only for the eventual 1935 Government of India Act, the final British effort to conciliate Indian opinion, but also for the structure of the independent Indian state created after 1947. From this perspective, Irwin's most significant contribution to the course of Indian policy was his insistence that Britain might retain its South Asian possessions through calculated concessions and gestures that played upon perceived weaknesses in the Indian character and the Indian body politic. As a Conservative of great influence and one held in great affection by members of the party leadership, Irwin found himself well-placed to transmit his ideas about Indian political behavior and to convince colonial policy-makers of the worth of his strategy, one which resulted in the 1935 Act, legislation constructed in the belief that such reforms would indeed divert Indian political energies.

Irwin's plan for meeting the nationalist challenge, and especially the process by which he came to it, moreover, revealed some of the real problems in the way British intelligence collection functioned – or in this case malfunctioned – in India. Irwin was, after all, a political appointee, one who had not served in India before and one whose capacity to collect and digest information about India was not as great as he might have assumed. In a life among the British elite, Irwin had, it appears, absorbed a certain, narrow image of the inhabitants of

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[267] Willingdon to Harcourt Butler, 22 January 1932, India Office Willingdon Papers, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/3–4.

[268] Quoted in Roberts, *"The Holy Fox"*, p. 39.

[269] Bombay Report, 16/25 March 1931, L/P&J/12/711/19.

the Raj, but it was not only this cultural self-assurance that shaped how he saw India. As Viceroy, Irwin lived within a fairly confined space, with limited and potentially problematic contact with only a select few of the colonized. He was at the center of a larger administrative organization, but one which faced real problems in gathering and analyzing information, whether from a sheer overload of work, persistent cultural biases, limited experience, declining numbers of local informants, or, in truth, a combination of all of these. Remarkably, however, even when local officials or police supervisors were able to get some reliable information, as to, for example, the size of crowds at Congress meetings or the number of businesses closed by boycotts, they were not able to make a further conceptual leap and credit these developments to real political interest on the part of the Indian populace. This was especially true in administrative assessments of peasants' relationship to the nationalists, where a real inability to conceive of a peasant political consciousness led to almost automatic dismissals of the strength of the Congress in the countryside. As the Viceroy at the top of this governmental bureaucracy, Irwin relied on heavily condensed and summarized intelligence by necessity, a practice inherently and unavoidably flawed by the fact that the initial information moving from even the lowest levels towards New Delhi was already quite partial and subjective. In this sort of environment, an opinionated and self-confident administrator like Irwin found few impediments to imposing his preconceptions upon the situation, given the lack of in-depth information and the ways in which what was available tended to reinforce such presumptions. And as the "man on the spot," the Viceroy had even further authority to speak to those in London. Hugh Tinker, in a recent assessment of Irwin's tenure, has argued that the Viceroy may have seen Gandhi as "the victim of self-conscious delusion," but that that characterization applies equally to Irwin himself.[270] Such a judgment may seem harsh, but then how else to explain a Viceroy who argued that Indian behavior was predictable, knowable and exploitable, but who left his post warning others that "everything in this country always turns out in the opposite sense to that which you might expect."[271]

270 Tinker, *Viceroy*, p. 122.

271 Irwin to Sykes, 31 March 1931, Mss. Eur. f.150/3a/140–142.

Chapter 3

The Problem of "Reliable Information": British-Indian Contacts in 1931 and 1932

Irwin's departure from New Delhi in April 1931, and his replacement by Lord Willingdon, did not mean a dramatic change in the overall direction of British policy in India, nor a complete reorientation of intelligence collection there. Willingdon did, however, bring a slightly different understanding to his role as Viceroy. A former Governor of Bombay and Madras, he occupied himself with administrative stability, continuity and political order, in contrast to Irwin's expansive, moralistic and almost self-congratulatory quest to understand India and to turn this knowledge towards the preservation of the Raj.[1] This, of course, owed something to the fact that larger policy-making questions remained outside the new Viceroy's remit, Irwin having both proposed the template for Britain's long-term strategy in India and fixed it in the minds of many in London. These included Hoare and Baldwin, members of the National Government Cabinet after September 1931, the former as Indian Secretary and the latter the leader of the dominant coalition partner. Irwin himself remained an advocate for his policy upon his return home as well, moving in political circles as an unofficial authority on India. The former Liberal MP Willingdon, moreover, did not enjoy the close personal ties to Hoare that Irwin did, meaning the Viceroy's voice became simply one among several – including Irwin and Hailey – providing advice and analysis to the Secretary between 1931 and 1935. The appointment of other Conservatives as Governors during Willingdon's term (Anderson in Bengal and Brabourne in Bombay) further diluted the Viceroy's influence. Willingdon eventually expressed frustration over the position Irwin had bequeathed him: "He has left me with a baby to bring up which is a squalling and unattractive little devil."[2]

Even if Willingdon had enjoyed closer connections to some of these politicians and administrators, he might not have been able to provide them with keener or more nuanced intelligence. As Viceroy, he had limited access to indigenous information or sources, and relied, as his predecessors had, on the potentially misleading or incomplete intelligence provided by the ICS and others in his Government. He had served as Governor in two provinces, as a political appointee, but this experience too proved somewhat limiting for his Viceregal

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1 See Brown, *Gandhi*, p. 253.

2 Quoted in Tinker, *Viceroy*, p. 130.

tenure. The Justice Party had emerged in Madras as a non-Brahmin rival to the Congress during Willingdon's Governorship at the end of the Great War; it was a development very much rooted in a particular South Indian society, but one which nevertheless left him convinced in the 1930s that something similar was possible on a pan-Indian scale.[3] This aristocrat, christened Freeman Freeman-Thomas, had absorbed many of the familiar colonial stereotypes about India too: in 1934, a frustrated Viceroy declared that Gandhi only drew crowds "because these stupid people still look upon him as a holy man."[4]

All of these factors, from Willingdon's problematic access to intelligence to the somewhat strained relationship between Viceroy and Indian Secretary, combined to complicate both the creation and the execution of policy in India. Despite his resentment at his limited scope for action, Willingdon seemed to feel at least some obligation to sustain Irwin's public commitment to political reform, leading him to propose an Indian as commercial member of the Viceroy's Council in late 1931, for example. He had also warned Hoare upon the formation of the National Government that the coalition would have to deal with India, not just economic issues, and that grave consequences would follow if Hoare and his colleagues "fail[ed] to carry through the plan by which they themselves have pledged their good faith to India."[5] However, Hoare, with one eye on India and one on the Tory party, believed that Willingdon did not grasp the delicacy of the domestic political situation; otherwise, he would never have made a proposal like the one for an Indian commercial member in the Council.[6] Although Hoare reminded Willingdon that the India Office remained committed to Irwin's reform ideas, he dwelled consistently, even incessantly, on the need to conciliate Conservative opinion.[7] The result was not only Willingdon's growing weariness with this process, but also the likely shaping of intelligence transmitted from New Delhi to London. Hoare's insistence on the need for politically usable information that promoted the efficacy of the reform scheme may, however inadvertently, have actually served to strengthen further his own sense that Irwin's strategy was the correct one. Thus, the addition of domestic political calculation narrowed an already-filtered stream of Indian political intelligence even further.

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3 For interwar Madras politics, see David Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad: Nationalist Politics in South India, 1919–1937* (Delhi: Curzon Press, 1977), p. 172. The failure of this party in Assembly elections in 1934 left Willingdon to ask: "What has happened to the Justice Party in Madras?" Willingdon to Erskine (Madras Governor), 19 November 1934, India Office Erskine Papers, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/3.

4 Willingdon to Harcourt Butler, 21 February 1934, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/71–72.

5 Willingdon to Hoare, 31 August 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/11a.

6 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 December 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/100–113.

7 See, for example, Hoare to Willingdon, 19 November 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/69–75.

These complications in information-gathering came at a time when there was in fact a demand for even more intelligence, not just about the Congress and its potential dissidents, but also regarding the political intentions of the Indian princes whose entry into the proposed federation had given Hoare a way to reassure wary Conservatives that Britain was not handing the Raj over to Gandhi and the Congress. Despite their initial enthusiasm for the federal scheme in late 1930, the princes and their representatives, especially those who had not attended the Round Table Conference in 1930, had by June 1931 begun to fracture over the federation idea, largely out of concern over preserving the fiscal and legal autonomy they had enjoyed under the Raj since the late nineteenth century.[8] Gaining a reliable sense of the princes' stance would allow Hoare to prepare for any political reaction to princely doubts. That Die Hard opponents of the reforms were working actively to turn the princes against federation made even more pressing the need for information about the princes' activities and consultations.[9]

The Gandhi-Irwin Pact

Irwin's truce with Gandhi had produced some decline in Congress activity, but Willingdon and the Government found plenty to worry them nonetheless in the spring and summer of 1931. While local officials could report that the truce had brought relief to many Indians who "are as tired of Civil Disobedience as we are," they also noted that the negotiations with Gandhi had also harmed "the Government's prestige … in the eyes of the majority of the people."[10] The Government had, it seemed, shown "the white feather."[11] The Bombay Government had warned of the possibility of such a reaction, and of the likelihood that anything that smacked of "surrender to Congress" would alienate those Indians who had thus far "remained loyal to Government."[12] Moreover, provincial Congress organizations appeared bent on using the interlude to retrench and were "straining every nerve to consolidate their position" in rural areas of Bombay, UP and the Punjab where agricultural distress continued to provoke rent and revenue strikes.[13] The summer of 1931 saw several violent, even fatal,

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8 See Copland, *The Princes of India*, pp. 99–102.

9 For an example of this concern, see Hoare to Willingdon, 3 August 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/767–787; more generally, see Copland, *Princes of India*, Chapter 4.

10 Bengal Report, February 1931, L/P&J/12/709/12; CP Report, March 1931, L/P&J/12/713/17.

11 CP Report, March 1931, L/P&J/12/713/17.

12 C.F. Borges to H. Haig, 31 January 1931, MSAO III/IV/Section 1/82–83.

13 Bombay Report, 1/8 April 1931, L/P&J/12/711/25–26; UP Report, April 1931, L/P&J/12/718/9; De Montmorency to Hailey, 23 April 1931, Mss. Eur. e.220/20/7–8; Hailey

attacks on colonial officials, including the Acting Governor of Bombay, a judge in Alipore in Bengal and a District Commissioner in Dhaka.[14] The problem, as ever, remained one of reliable information.[15] The Punjab government reminded New Delhi in April that "[i]t is by no means easy to evaluate correctly the forces at work in the political field at the moment." What the Punjab Governor could say, however, was that despite the truce, "Altogether, I don't like the look of things."[16] Another provincial government noted in the days after the Gandhi-Irwin pact that it "would be useless to attempt to prophesy the future course of events" until the full measure of the Indian response was understood.[17] In Bengal, local officials continued to face violent opposition, but were "without information of what is going on in the interior" of the province, the rural areas that sheltered some of these nationalists.[18] Furthermore, Bengal authorities (like those in Bombay) argued that Irwin's concessions to Gandhi had in fact undermined the provincial government's ability to use previously reliable "sources of information," as these Indians now felt that the Raj had lost "prestige," and especially its "ability to protect them."[19]

Gandhi himself proved a source of even further uncertainty, as he negotiated with both his Congress colleagues and the British over the particulars of his upcoming participation in the second Round Table Conference in London. He wished to attend the Conference as the sole representative of the Congress which spoke for a unified India, but Britain refused to recognize the Congress as such and, moreover, Indian politicians had not yet been able to come to an agreement on the communal question. The continued disputes over reserved seats and separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims undermined any idea of a united India whose cause Gandhi would champion. Both British and Indian representatives, Gandhi included, were also enmeshed during the summer of 1931 in a contentious dispute over what each side saw as the other's failure to abide by the terms of the March pact, with colonial officials convinced that Congress had not fully ceased and nationalists dissatisfied with the progress of

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to Willingdon, 27 April 1931, Mss. Eur. e.220/20/28–33; Punjab Report, 30 April 1931, L/P&J/12/717/29–30. See also Central Provinces PAI, 13 June 1931, MSAO XII/II/283–285.

14 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Reports (23 July 1931; 30 July 1931; 27 September 1931), L/P&J/12/390/73–86.

15 As D.A. Low has noted for early 1932, colonial officials found it "extremely difficult to judge their standing in the rural areas at all correctly." Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 109.

16 Punjab Report, 15 April 1931, L/P&J/12/717/26; Punjab Governor Geoffrey de Montmorency, 14 March 1931, quoted in Mridula Mukherjee, *Peasants in India's Non-Violent Revolution: Practice and Theory* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 95.

17 CP Report, April 1931, L/P&J/12/713/22.

18 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 21 May 1931, L/P&J/12/390/63–68.

19 Ibid.

government enquiries into rural revenue demands.[20] By June Willingdon conceded that, "Gandhi is still an enigma … He is a weird little man, attractive in a way, but as cunning as he can be [and] always looking to get an advantage."[21] Over the summer, official speculation continued about Gandhi's intentions and his relations with other members of the Congress leadership.[22]

News of the continuing activity by Congress politicians and others, especially in Bengal, disquieted some in London, including influential members of Irwin's circle. R.A. Butler, a perceptive and politically well-attuned young Tory MP, noted, that "[Irwin] has already succeeded in convincing his own generation" about Indian policy, but that "there will be much criticism in his time as well."[23] Butler, neither one of Irwin's confidantes, nor a member of the latter's "generation," later provided a scathing review of Irwin's effort to explain his strategy to the Conservative India Committee in June 1931. Butler recoiled at Irwin's contention that British "prestige was gone," a remark Butler attributed to Irwin's "courageous naïveté." Moreover, the young MP did not approve of Irwin's argument that his pact with Gandhi would "ensure that the older [Indian] politicians would be on our side" against Nehru and his "great agrarian forces." For Butler, Irwin's admission "that he was using the 'Divide to Rule' philosophy, was more than I could stand," and the former Viceroy's "matter of fact" tone in discussing Gandhi jarred with Butler's presumption that Irwin had "dealt with [Gandhi] as one mystic with another."[24] This last, tongue-in-cheek remark aside, it was quite a comprehensive critique by a politician who had expected a more sincerely idealistic Irwin. Irwin's closer colleagues and friends were kinder in their reception of the Viceroy. Leo Amery remarked: "On the whole I think he is right but with some misgivings."[25] In a similar vein, Neville Chamberlain came away from a meeting with Irwin asserting that "in spite of all criticisms I retain my belief in him."[26] Hoare himself confessed later in 1931 that he had "hated the long drawn out negotiations between Irwin and Gandhi" and that as Indian Secretary he had no enthusiasm for "altering our line of action against terrorism, revolution and anarchy for the purpose of buying off Congress opposition."[27] Despite Hoare's

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20 For a full summary of these events, see Judith Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience: The Mahatma in Indian Politics, 1928–34* (Cambridge, 1977), Chapter 5.

21 Willingdon to Florence Brooks, 21 June 1931, India Office Willingdon Papers, Mss. Eur. f.237/3.

22 Bombay Secret Abstract, 15 and 22 August 1931, MSAO III/IV/64–65.

23 R.A. Butler to M. Butler, 23 April 1931, RAB D48/812–816.

24 R.A. Butler to M. Butler, 24 June 1931, RAB D48/840–842; R.A. Butler, 2 July 1931, RAB D48/851–855.

25 Amery Diary II/161, 17 May 1931.

26 N. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 25 July 1931, NC 1/18/749.

27 Hoare to Willingdon, 31 December 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/114–125.

sense that Irwin had left an impression that Britain was "abdicating" in India, he did not abandon the latter's larger goal of forcing divisions within the nationalist ranks.[28] Rather, he retained the larger strategy, while embracing a different set of tactics. To Irwin's policy of rhetoric and gestures, Hoare added a commitment to consistent and sustained repression, one that would further force Indians to reconsider their attachment to the Congress and one that would protect Hoare from charges of capitulating to Gandhi.

Despite these concerns about the impact of Irwin's policy and the continuation of Congress activity in India, British opinion in India was not entirely gloomy. As had been the case in 1930, colonial administrators still found, or at least declared present, encouraging signs to counter predictions that Irwin's strategy had fatally compromised the Raj. Reports from the UP argued that Congress had achieved popularity solely by exploiting an economic situation that had "provided a field for Congress agitation which it could never have hoped to secure otherwise."[29] Herbert Emerson, the Home Secretary in New Delhi, expressed a similar sentiment in July 1931 when he "challenged [Gandhi's] statement that Congress was identical with the *kisans*," and argued that Congress had only embraced the peasants' cause in mid-1931 as "part of the policy of consolidation in rural areas as preparation for a new fight."[30] Delhi officials contended that, "while many village officials and cultivators are ready to support Government, Congress propaganda has penetrated the minds of the rural population, which is mostly Hindu Jat." This new focus on the peasantry, these officials also noted, had provoked "bitter hostility" within the local Congress organization.[31] The District Magistrate for Surat, whose territory included Bardoli, site of Gandhi's earlier efforts at tax protests, relayed his hope that the village "will for the present be left in peace to concentrate more on farming than politics, which the villagers themselves really prefer."[32] Even a pessimistic Hailey saw this shift towards the concerns of the rural poor as possibly opening up a potentially helpful fissure in the Congress between a more moderate Gandhi and the "communist" Nehru.[33] In fact Hailey maintained to an India Office colleague that the federal scheme, if enacted promptly, was more than "a good red herring, but … really some

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28 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 December 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/100–113.

29 UP Report, June 1931, L/P&J/12/718/14; see also: Assam Reports, May and June 1931, L/P&J/12/708/15–17.

30 Emerson diary, 16 July 1931, in *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (SWJN)*, Series 1, Volume 5 (New Delhi, 1973), p. 24 (fn. 2). See also, Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 161.

31 Delhi Report, 22 July 1931, L/P&J/12/714/17.

32 Bombay Abstract, 1 August 1931, MSAO III/IV/58.

33 Hailey to Stewart, 23 May 1931, Mss. Eur. e.220/20/141–150; Hailey to Irwin, 27 June 1931, Mss. Eur. 220/21a/265–271.

thing much more substantial."[34] Left unremarked, was that Congress rhetoric was beginning to converge with that of the Raj, in appearance if not in meaning, as exemplified in Nehru's proclamation of late July that "[t]he Congress stands for complete independence and the typical Indian is the man behind the plough."[35]

Colonial officials also continued to assert Indians' apparent incapability of sustaining a mass nationalist movement. The central Intelligence Bureau in New Delhi saw the Bengal Congress as wholly implicated in the violence of mid-1931 and attributed these actions to "gullible and impressionable young men" swayed by the party's rhetoric; by the end of 1931 these same officials concluded that "[i]n Bengal, the dividing line between political activities and terrorism is narrow."[36] Moreover, relations between the more moderate and aggressive factions in the Bengali Congress appeared "more strained than ever," as tension grew particularly between Nehru and S.C. Bose.[37] All of these factors meant, according to one District Magistrate in the province, that "there has been a considerable degree of disillusionment since last year, and that if Government take firm steps from the outset, [any] fresh movement will not obtain great dimensions."[38] Reports from Central India in 1931 also emphasized further perceived limitations in indigenous political capacity, from an account of the lukewarm reception local Congress notables in Berar gave to Sardar Patel's call for future personal sacrifices in the nationalist cause to descriptions of caste rivalries within local Congress organizations.[39] And there were multiple reports of communal tension, many stressing the refusal of Muslims to cooperate in Congress ventures, the heightened religious rhetoric employed by groups like the Hindu Mahasabha, and even Congress itself, and the many clashes between the groups over Congress's picketing of Muslim cloth traders and the non-payment of rent from Hindu tenants to Muslim landlords in

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34 Hailey to Stewart, 15 June 1931, India Office Findlater Stewart Papers, Mss. Eur. d.890/9/41–7.

35 Nehru speech at Lahore, 28 July 1931, SWJN 1/5, 105–106. On Congress elites and the Indian peasantry, see Gyanendra Pandey, "Congress and the Nation, 1917–1947" in *Congress and Indian Nationalism: The Pre-Independence Phase*, Richard Sisson and Stanley Wolpert, eds (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1988), pp. 121–133.

36 Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 6 August 1931, L/P&J/12/390/81; Intelligence Bureau Weekly Report, 17 December 1931, L/P&J/12/391/4.

37 Bengal Report, April 1931, L/P&J/12/709/24; Bengal Report, November 1931, L/P&J/12/709/66.

38 Bengal Report, November 1931, L/P&J/12/709/63.

39 CP Report, June 1931, L/P&J/12/713/27; CP PAI, 13 June 1931, MSAO XII/II/283–285; CP Report, September 1931, L/P&J/12/713/35; for more remarks on caste issues, including the rise of an untouchable bloc, see Bombay Report, 16/26 October 1931, L/P&J/12/711/69–70.

U.P. particularly.[40] The use by Congress of various Hindu symbols, and especially the party's public association of Gandhi with deities like Rama, may have further convinced colonial authorities that religion was the ultimate basis of Indian identity, and thus that Hindu-Muslim rivalry would never disappear, and that Congress was a more spiritual and emotional, rather than political, organization. As William Gould has recently noted, such an understanding of the Congress allowed the British to put "civil disobedience into the category of irrational fanaticism."[41]

All of these considerations, plus Gandhi's eventual commitment to attend the Round Table in exchange for what were "minimal"[42] concessions by Willingdon on land revenue relief, meant that there was some optimism in the India Office by the fall of 1931 about the prospects for strategic concessions to consolidate the Raj. Hailey, despite his troubles in the U.P., felt confident enough to claim that "in the East democracy is being demanded not by the great mass of the people themselves, but by an intellectual class which hopes thereby to gain control of the people."[43] In memoranda prepared for Hoare, various officials, in India and in London, argued that the federal plan might still find favor in India where "[p]ublic opinion has been educated to accept 'responsibility with safeguards.'"[44] According to one provincial administrator, active Congress followers comprised less than one per cent of his population and there remained still a little time to attract them to the reforms:

> If we do not give them such liberty to join the Constitution, then we shall be encouraging these men to favour direct action more and more. If, however, we frame a Constitution on suitable lines, then the real insignificance of these irreconcilables in the body politic of India will be patent, and they will steadily lose their influence. Care must therefore also be taken that the real people of India should, as soon as is practicable and as soon as possible under present conditions, have an active voice in their own affairs.[45]

British assessments of the Congress were not, however, the only intelligence efforts going on in India in 1931. Officials, and many interested Indians, kept a close eye

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40 Bombay Report, 16/24 April 1931, L/P&J/12/711/29–30; Punjab Report, 30 April 1931, L/P&J/12/717/29–30. On the persistence of religious tensions, and even the reliance of Congress on religious imagery and rhetoric, see Gould, *Hindu Nationalism* and Zoya Hasan, "Congress in Aligarh District, 1930–1946: Problems of Political Mobilization" in Sisson and Wolpert eds, *Congress and Indian Nationalism*, pp. 330–351.

41 Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*, p. 56.

42 Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, p. 238.

43 Hailey to J.T. Gwynn, 13 August 1931, Mss. Eur. e.220/21b/399–403.

44 Memorandum of Sir George Corbett, 30 October 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/52b/22.

45 "Heads for Discussion," 5 October 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/52a/8.

on the arguments growing among the Indian princes over the federal solution that some of these royals had, of course, originally proposed in late 1930. As Irwin had noted to Hoare, "[t]ime will show whether [the Princes] will appreciate all the implications of Federation!"[46] Hailey too believed that the princes were "very apprehensive" that some aspects of the federal scheme might undermine their own positions, particularly by opening the states to greater scrutiny from Indians who wished to replace autocratic rule with representative government.[47] Indeed, by June 1931 a group of princes from the smaller states had begun a campaign against federation, and against the larger states like Mysore and Hyderabad that had supported it.[48] Sapru, fully cognizant that princely disapproval could spell the end of any federal plan, was briefly concerned about the princes' potential change in attitude, and dismayed that some of his fellow Indian Liberals were the most vociferous critics of the princely regimes.[49] However, Sapru was also confident that "personal jealousies" and the influence of "certain advisers" were the real forces behind princely discontent; the public statement by the majority of the princes in July 1931 that they remained committed to federation affirmed Sapru's thinking.[50] An India Office adviser assured his colleagues in September, at the start of the second Round Table Conference, that the princes were still likely to follow through on the federal plan.[51]

Sapru's remarks that outside interests had persuaded some of the princes to speak out against the federal idea demonstrated his own continued campaign both to assess British sentiments about political reform and to provide or shape information that might reassure pro-reform officials. He had not had as much contact directly with Willingdon as he had had with Irwin, in part because Gandhi was not imprisoned and thus free to contact the Viceroy without intermediaries. From his meeting with Willingdon, Sapru discerned that the Viceroy wanted "the completest of success for the Round Table Conference," but worried that Willingdon's advisers were not similarly inclined; indeed, that some officials "though they profess loyalty to the scheme of Federation are in truth very much opposed to it and they will welcome a split among the Princes."[52] Sapru also feared that, through

46 Irwin to Hoare, 11 December 1930, Mss. Eur. e.240/76/96.

47 Hailey to Irwin, 9 December 1930, Mss. Eur. e.220/34.

48 Copland, *Princes of India,* pp. 99–100.

49 Sapru to C.P. Ramaswami Aiyer, 9 July 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 192–194.

50 Sapru to Jayakar, 12 June 1931, Sapru Papers 1/J/255; Sapru to H.S.L. Polak, 12 July 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 195–198.

51 See Sir Reginald Glancy's assessment of 1 September 1931, as highlighted by Bridge in *Holding India*, pp. 75–76.

52 Sapru to C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar, 4 June 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 189–190; Sapru to H.S.L. Polak, 12 July 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 195–198; K.N. Haksar to Sapru, 16 July 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 198–199.

misjudgment or bad advice, Willingdon would send "extreme communalists" to the London conference, where the failure to achieve a Hindu-Muslim settlement could jeopardize the entire reform program.[53] In an effort to keep pro-reform sentiment alive in London, and to counteract any information that colonial officials might disseminate to slow the progress of federation, Sapru wote to Labour politicians in London in May 1931 that news accounts of the "situation in India" were not nearly as bad as it had been a year earlier:

> There are no demonstrations, no angry speeches, no arrests no prosecutions, no lathi charges and aggressive boycott or picketing anywhere. It would be wrong to infer from stray speeches or from stray acts of a foolish character of certain individuals in a big country like Indian that the situation is as bad as it is represented to be.[54]

Already attentive, therefore, to the princes and the colonial administration, Sapru had his eye on Gandhi too, for he was convinced that the Mahatma must at least attend the Round Table Conference, even if he ultimately rejected the federal plan, as that would not allow Gandhi to "prejudice our work at the Round Table Conference in advance."[55] Moreover, Sapru, Jayakar and other Indian Liberals seemed to believe that Gandhi himself was more moderate than others in the Congress leadership, and that in London, "removed from local influences, Gandhi may be a great force in the right direction."[56] Sapru and his colleagues may have even expressed this view to Willingdon, as the Viceroy nearly echoed their words when he wrote to Hoare upon Gandhi's departure from India for London in late August 1931: "You will find him I think amenable and anxious to help, with a real desire to work out a satisfactory constitution … I feel that in his new surroundings … he will be a help and not a hindrance."[57]

Gandhi and the Second Round Table Conference

Gandhi's participation in the London conference, between September and December 1931, did not do much to alter the status quo; the India Office did

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[53] Sapru to B.L. Mitter, 30 May 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 188–189.

[54] Sapru to Lord Sankey, 24 May 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 184–185. Sapru asked Sankey to pass on his views to MacDonald and Wedgwood Benn.

[55] Sapru to K.N. Haksar, 25 May 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 186–187; Sapru to B.L. Mitter, 30 May 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 188–189.

[56] Sapru to Jayakar, 30 May 1931, Sapru Papers 1/J; Jayakar to Sapru, 7 June 1931, Sapru Papers 1/J; Aiyar to Sapru, 11 July 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 194.

[57] Willingdon to Hoare, 28 August 1931, in Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 254–255.

not move beyond the limited federal plan, while Gandhi and Congress sought true Indian independence, well beyond Irwin's Dominion Status pledge. The conference failed to solve the communal question, with Gandhi vehemently opposed both to separate electorates for Hindus and Muslims (and Sikhs in the Punjab) and to the new demands by untouchables, through their leader, B.R. Ambedkar, for their own electorate as well.[58] Sastri, also in London for the talks, reflected the general atmosphere in a letter home: "As last year, the Communal problem blocks the way … The Moslems and the Sikhs as usual are at loggerheads in the Punjab. One wishes that province were destroyed by an earthquake."[59] Furthermore, the princes and their representatives remained so vague about the conditions for their actual accession to a federal India that they brought that part of the conference "to a standstill."[60] Despite this lack of movement on the larger reform issues, nevertheless, the second Round Table did appear to have some important impact upon British perceptions of the political situation in India; specifically, the conference reinforced the belief that a divided and politically incapable India existed and thus was open to manipulation.

In the first place, the fall of 1931 was the only time before the 1935 Act passed in which London-based officials met personally with a Congress representative, and not just any Congressman, but the party's iconic and now globally prominent leader. This encounter, however, took place during a time of domestic political and economic strain, the new National Government having replaced MacDonald's Labourites at the end of August and scheduled a General Election for late October. It was a time of transition, including at the India Office where Hoare replaced Wedgwood Benn, and a hectic one at that. Willingdon was not pleased to learn that the coalition would "hold office for the sole purpose of settling the British financial problem" and warned Hoare that concentrating solely on economic affairs, while failing to follow through on the pledges of the first Round Table would "encourage even amongst moderately minded Indians the question whether the British Government can properly claim to interfere at all, in Indian affairs, if they have no time or interest to do so."[61] Hoare and Willingdon encountered several rough patches throughout the final months of 1931, not just over political reform, but over the different responsibilities each felt he had, the Viceroy to India and the Secretary to his Cabinet and party. Willingdon and his Council, faced with a growing economic crisis in India caused mainly by the worldwide fall in agricultural prices, laid out their plan for economic

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[58] See Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 254–260.

[59] Sastri to D.V. Gundappa, 7 October 1931, *Sastri Letters*, p. 221; Hoare to Willingdon, 6 November 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/65–68.

[60] Hoare to Willingdon, 19 November 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/69–75; Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 100–105.

[61] Willingdon telegram to Hoare, 31 August 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/11a.

revitalization: a rise in Indian customs duties, a pay-cut for Indian civil servants, and the devaluation of the rupee. The only way to avoid this scenario, Willingdon pointed out, was for London to grant a large sterling credit to India so that the Viceroy could balance the Raj's books, and thus keep the rupee pegged to sterling at the customary rate.[62] Proposals more threatening to the interests of the major supporters of the Conservative party would have been hard to find: Willingdon's proposals meant that Lancashire would face both higher tariffs and increased prices on Indian imports, while any cuts in the civil service salaries might raise the ire of the ex-ICS lobby on the south coast, and the devaluation itself would instantly affect anyone in Britain holding Indian stock or bills in rupees. In office barely a week, Hoare saw all these same problems with the Viceroy's plan, and argued furiously with Willingdon for less drastic steps, stating bluntly that the Government of India's solution was "simply not practical politics."[63] After much heated discussion, threats of resignation, and Cabinet refusals to send any sterling to India in the midst of a worldwide panic, the situation was in part resolved, and in part resolved itself. The Cabinet reluctantly approved the tariff increase and the pay cuts, but prevented the decoupling of the rupee from sterling.[64] The Indian position improved when Britain went off the gold standard, as sterling dropped nearly 25 per cent against gold, allowing many in India to sell gold and gain a neat profit within the closed Anglo-Indian economy. The Government of India then shipped the gold to London, thus paying off its own debts and bolstering Britain's gold reserves, a fortuitous ending to a potentially very damaging crisis. Indian fiscal autonomy, even with safeguards, now seemed a dangerous proposition.

There were further signs that the London-New Delhi relationship might not be very warm, as the two men also clashed over Willingdon's plan to add an Indian, Sir Jospeh Bhore, to his Council and even over Hoare's criticism of remarks by the Viceroy and his advisers that had angered Tories in Parliament.[65] And this contentiousness was only one of the many concerns of Hoare and his political allies as they welcomed Gandhi and the other Indian delegations to London. These various distractions may not have affected Hoare's and his colleagues' views of Indian politics very greatly, but it is nevertheless worth noting that these pressing matters meant that British officials and policy-makers in late 1931 did not even have the time to reconsider the preconceptions and

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62 These events are described in Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 211–218 and Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 343–347.

63 Hoare to Willingdon, 2 September 1931, Mss Eur. e.240/1/1–6; see also Hoare telegrams to Willingdon, 14 and 18 September 1931, Mss Eur. e.240/13a/1–11; Hoare to Willingdon, 25 September 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/16–20.

64 Willingdon telegrams #794S and 803S to Hoare, 23 and 24 September 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/11a.

65 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 December 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/100–113.

policy ideas they brought to the negotiating table. The strategy for India was set, and Hoare and his advisers found enough in the conference to assure them that the plan was the right one.

Given all these events – what Hoare called "the rush of crises through which we are passing"[66] – it is not surprising that Gandhi's visit to London did not captivate the domestic press, save for his excursions to meet with Lancashire textile workers and the curiosity that surrounded his decision to stay in East London at Toynbee Hall.[67] R.A. Butler, whose early sense of Gandhi had been positive, felt that "Ghandi [sic] has never come off in the limelight here, and has not captured the soul of the Great British public."[68] Those officials and advisers who met and consulted with Gandhi dealt with him fairly straightforwardly, but saw him as both politically calculating and somewhat otherworldly. Neville Chamberlain's impression of Gandhi was one of the more extreme: "He is a revolting looking creature, without any redeeming features in his face that I could see. Not that it was wicked or sly looking – there was just no charm whatever."[69] Edward Benthall, attending the conference as a representative of British business interests in India, concluded after meeting Gandhi that the Mahatma was "too old for the job and has been too long accustomed to being a dictator."[70] Hoare, to whom condescension came quite easily, noted that Gandhi "has throughout behaved most politely and correctly and we got on quite well at our talk."[71] By the end of the conference though, the Indian Secretary, faced with communal and princely issues, found Gandhi "as unaccountable as ever."[72]

Gandhi's physical appearance, his diet and periodic days of silence and his embrace of religious vocabulary and imagery further reinforced descriptions of the mystical Gandhi that originated with Indian officials, undermining his significance as a hardheaded political actor in British eyes. As Tim Pratt and James Vernon have noted recently, British press accounts of Gandhi in the 1930s framed him as an essentially "premodern" figure who ultimately looked to Hindu

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66 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 September 1931, Mss. Eur. e.210/1/12–15.

67 Tim Pratt and James Vernon, "'Appeal from this fiery bed …': The Colonial Politics of Gandhi's Fasts and Their Metropolitan Reception," *Journal of British Studies* 44 (January 2005), pp. 92–114, esp. p. 97.

68 Butler to his parents, 18 November 1931, RAB D48/912–914; see also Butler to his parents, 17 September 1931, RAB D48/881–884.

69 N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 6 December 1931, NC 1/18/764.

70 E.C. Benthall to P.H. Browne, 28 October 1931, Benthall Papers (Cambridge South Asia Centre), II/2/42.

71 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 September 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/12–15.

72 Hoare to Willingdon, 6 November 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/65–68; Brown, *Gandhi and Civil Disobedience*, pp. 247–252.

"mythology" as his guide.[73] In his memoirs, Hoare argued he had found Gandhi's mind "quickly sensitive to emotional appeal" and that "[a]s an Eastern, his eye was on the final principle rather than the steps to be taken to achieve it."[74] These perceptions of Gandhi as a mystic, a scheming *bania* or a sentimentalist were not the only factors shaping British assessments of Gandhi's, and thus the Congress's, real political power though. The events of the conference themselves served to affirm the notion of an inalterably divided India, one which no party might unite. The failure to achieve a settlement on the question of separate electorates, and especially the emergence of Ambedkar's campaign for such recognition of untouchables, appeared to demonstrate not just religious, but also immutable caste divisions, another familiar piece of the traditional colonial picture of India. Moreover, as Sumit Sarkar has pointedly contended, the conference was a "pointless exercise," since Congress, though by far the most popular and organized political organization in India, was only one of many groups, "some quite minor or unrepresentative," at the talks.[75] The idea that Congress was simply one of several potentially important and influential parties in India was certainly reassuring to colonial officials who had pinned their hopes on a fractured Indian polity.[76] It also served Sapru, who grasped, and was willing to use, his position as a non-Congress alternative as leverage in these negotiations.[77] He was able in that way at the end of the conference to prevent the British from abandoning the 1930 federal plan – and substituting simple provincial autonomy in its place – out of frustration at the lack of a communal agreement, threatening that "neither I nor other men of my way of thinking" would support anything except legislation that provided explicitly for an Indian federation.[78] He was not prepared to allow the British to move backwards from where he had had them in 1930. Finally, if the India Office needed further confirmation of political fractiousness on the subcontinent, reports from several sources indicated the persistence of nationalist actions during the conference, a sign that Gandhi "found it increasingly difficult

73 Pratt and Vernon, "From this fiery bed …" p. 99.

74 Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, pp. 62–63.

75 Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 320.

76 In addition to Gandhi representing Congress, the conference included princely representatives, orthodox Hindu delegations, Punjabi Sikhs, untouchables, Anglo-Indians and European businessmen based in India.

77 Hoare himself did not believe that Hindu political opinion was "unanimous" on the question of provincial autonomy without simultaneous federation: see Hoare memorandum of 9 November 1931, quoted in Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 78. For the argument that Sapru's "ambivalence" towards Congress gave Gandhi "more leverage," see Judith Brown, "The Role of a National Leader: Gandhi, Congress and Civil Disobedience, 1929–34" in *Congress & the Raj: Facets of the Indian Struggle 1917–47*, Low and Washbrook eds, p. 152.

78 Sapru to MacDonald, 13 November 1931, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 200–202.

to control his followers."[79] According to New Scotland Yard, busy monitoring the local Congress branch in London, Gandhi was being denounced "as a traitor and a compromiser" and "would not retain more than a quarter of his present followers" upon his return to India.[80]

The End of Civil Disobedience

The 1931 Round Table concluded with a reaffirmation by MacDonald, the Prime Minister, of the federal scheme, a pledge by the British Government to bring about a Communal Award or settlement in 1932, and the naming of three investigative committees that would visit India to examine more closely the expansion of the franchise, the state of Indian finances and the particulars of princely accession to a federal state. In India, however, the failure of the conference to move much further towards real Indian autonomy meant a resumption of active, coordinated civil disobedience by Congress, begun even before Gandhi returned from London.[81] Willingdon, with Hoare's support, quickly detained Gandhi and the rest of the Congress leadership.[82] This crackdown, planned as a contingency during the summer in case of renewed Congress demonstrations, eventually imprisoned thousands, leading many provincial administrators to crow over the complete defeat inflicted on Congress, and to find some larger meanings in this turn of events.

Analyses that reached New Delhi emphasized that the detention of the Congress leaders had laid bare the party's shallow support and its adherents' timidity. A consistent theme was that the removal of Congress agitators from rural areas had halted all political activity there, proof of the true apolitical nature of the peasantry and of the artificiality of any previous nationalist action in the countryside.[83] Deprived of leaders, and of the solid rural masses, the real Congress, in the official view, now stood exposed. A march of 20,000 protestors in Banares in early January contained a "predominant low-class element," and party volunteers still active were largely "mendicants" or "hungry propagandists" whose presence

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[79] Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, p. 91. For examples of reports of renewed activity, see Bombay Report, 16/26/October 1931, L/P&J/12/711/69–70; Delhi Report, 18 November 1931, L/P&J/12/714/26; Assam Report, December 1931, L/P&J/12/708/32.

[80] New Scotland Yard Report, 25 November 1931, L/P&J/12/60/28.

[81] Bengal Report, November 1931, L/P&J/12/709/63; Bombay Report, 1/20 January 1932, L/P&J/12/711/83.

[82] Brown, *Gandhi*, pp. 262–264; Hoare to Willingdon, 31 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/114–125; Hoare to Willingdon, 8 January 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/126–132.

[83] See Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 109–110.

had begun to wear on rural villagers.[84] The District Commissioner of Burdwan in Bengal claimed that the local Congress had been so "reduced to seek the aid of prostitutes and vagabond youths and children to stage the demonstrations by which they seem to lay so much store."[85] Another report from Bengal opined that "many of the women and the boys in the processions belong to the lower classes and probably have no objection to being fed in jail."[86] The countryside, to British eyes, was either loyal to the government or, at the least, wanted only peace and quiet.[87] According to one report, an "agriculturist" had spoken out at a "loyalty meeting" in Surat: "Damn Congress, damn politicians; who cares what form of Government there is or who governs: all that we want is to see that we are not overtaxed and are left in peace."[88] The failure of a "Gandhi Day" meeting in an urban area like Nagpur convinced the local D.C. that "the public in general have no sympathy whatever with Congress."[89] At the end of 1932, Bombay authorities, who had faced some of the most sustained nationalist action, now believed that only "feeble" remnants of Civil Disobedience remained.[90] Some revenue and rent protests did continue, in the U.P. particularly, but local officials were quick to blame them on an "economic situation [that] is favorable from the Congress point of view."[91]

Regarding feeling within the nationalist organization itself, Hailey, writing from the U.P., noted that "Congress volunteers, etc., have practically disappeared from the rural areas." He saw a "growing feeling of depression in Congress circles" as Muslims and the "depressed classes" remained opposed to cooperation, and as people generally had become "tired of joining in a kind of demonstration which had twice before been attempted and had brought them nothing in return."[92] At

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84 UP Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/729/2–4. Delhi reported that arrests of marchers yielded "mostly hirelings." (Delhi Report, 31 January 1932, L/P&J/12/725/3) For a similar assessment, see Bombay Report, 16/24 October 1932, L/P&J/12/722/82.

85 Bengal Report, March 1932, L/P&J/12/720/22.

86 Bengal Report, March 1932, L/P&J/12/720/18.

87 D.A. Low recounts a 1932 Government of India survey of political opinion in *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 108–109; see also UP Report, February 1932, L/P&J/12/729/11. A local commissioner in rural Bombay claimed to have attracted 4,000 to a rally opposing civil disobedience (Bombay Report, 16 February/4 March 1932, L/P&J/12/722/10–12. In the Punjab, the government reported that the "event of importance" was not Gandhi's arrest, but "the welcome fall of rain" (Punjab Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/728/2).

88 Bombay Report, 1/14 May 1932, L/P&J/12/722/34–38.

89 CP Report, July 1932, L/P&J/12/724/23.

90 See Bombay Government reports on Civil Disobedience at L/P&J/7/298.

91 UP Report, November 1932, L/P&J/12/729/85.

92 Hailey to Hoare, 28 February 1932, copy at Simon Bodleian Papers, Mss. Simon 71/146–154. On anti-Congress sentiment among the "depressed classes," see also CP Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/724/2–3.

the end of 1932, he reiterated his impression that "the great bulk of the population is getting a little tired of the whole thing."[93] Hailey also remained convinced that Indians were not yet suited to enjoy an expanded franchise, no matter what, due to their continued tendency to see ministers as 'wazirs.'"[94] Another of Willingdon's advisers, Haig, argued that continued pressure on the Congress would cause many in the party to have "increasing doubts" about their course and grasp "the power that is offered them." In pushing for sustained repression of the nationalists, moreover, Haig, like many others in the Raj, drew upon the Irish example, albeit from a different angle, stressing that Congress, with the "Irish analogy … continually before their minds," believed that Britain would eventually "tire and give way."[95] Willingdon himself echoed this assertion that Indians lacked real political character, predicting that even Indians who abhorred the repression of Congress would not condemn the Raj outright, largely out of a desire to maintain a foot "in both camps."[96] These reports, as well as correspondence with Indian manufacturers and others, left Hoare with the impression that even business leaders like G.D. Birla, the textile industrialist who had generally supported Gandhi and the Congress, were "genuinely coming round to the view that cooperation with [the British] is the best policy."[97] The Bombay authorities, in this vein, reported that some Ahmedabad mill-owners had postponed orders for British-made machinery, but that this was "apparently only a sop to Congress and it appears that they have no intention of doing without British machinery when they really require it."[98] In fact, the senior police in Bombay were more disgusted with the European cotton merchants in the city and their unwillingness to condemn the continued boycotts of some firms dealing foreign cloth. The Police Commissioner reported that the attitude of these traders "was certainly deplorable" and showed that they "were not out for a fight."[99] Even in Bengal, where attacks against colonial officials, including the Governor in February 1932, had continued, the provincial authorities found "ground for hope that the responsible elements in Hindu society are beginning

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93 Hailey to Irwin, 3 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/30–41.

94 Hailey to J.H. Brown, 15 June 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24b/258–264.

95 Haig to E.C. Mieville (Willingdon's Private Secretary), 13 April 1932, India Office Haig Papers, Mss. Eur. f.115/1/6–12. Haig wrote later in 1932 that "[t]he Indian politician has seen many settled facts unsettled whether in India or Ireland and this profoundly influences his outlook" (Haig to Mieville, 31 October 1932, Mss. Eur. f.115/1/108–112).

96 Willingdon to Harcourt Butler, 9 January 1932, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/1–2.

97 Hoare to Anderson, 22 April 1932, India Office Anderson Papers, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/34–37. For more on Birla's own contacts with Hoare and the former's statements about possible cooperation with Britain, see Sarkar, *Modern India*, 325. See more generally: Claude Markovits, *Indian Business and Nationalist Politics, 1931–1939: The Indigenous Capitalist Class and the Rise of the Congress Party* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 82–90.

98 Bombay Report, 1/15 March 1932, L/P&J/12/722/16.

99 Kelly to Clee, 23 June 1932, MSAO XII/I/232–233.

to turn with disgust from an attitude of half-hearted condemnation of terrorist outrage and are beginning to realize that these crimes are bringing the Province into disrepute and will in the long run bring retribution on the classes of persons responsible for encouraging them."[100]

These reports of nationalist collapse, however, may have been somewhat exaggerated; at the least, and like many pieces of intelligence generated by the colonial administration, they were prone to generalizations and some quite subjective analysis. For most of 1932, colonial officials focused on the impact of the governmental crackdown on Congress, and the meaning of Indian responses to it. The arrest and conviction of up to 80,000 Indians, including the most prominent national and provincial leaders of Civil Disobedience, throughout 1932 and 1933 significantly reduced nationalist activism, as it could only have done, but the Raj read more into it than that. The decline in activity in the countryside reinforced the already-prevalent notion that outside agitators had been chiefly responsible for stirring up the rural populace.[101] When the number of convictions in the U.P. began to slow in the spring of 1932, moreover, the provincial government was not inclined to treat this simply as a result of having already convicted 4,500 Indians by February of that year alone. Instead, the U.P. administration offered this development as proof of Indian timidity, indicating "a growing disinclination to defy Government openly and to court arrest."[102] Similarly, in the Punjab, officials found a "marked disinclination for martyrdom," and passed on the story of one Congressman returning to Amritsar who "asked nervously of a policeman at the station if there were any orders about him; and hastened to make it known that he was at home on a holiday and not on Congress business."[103] To the colonial mind, it seemed, an unwillingness to go to jail, and thus render oneself less useful, was not always a sign of rational political preservation, but one of a lack of courage. Did the man truly ask "nervously?" In the view of the Raj, he could do no other.[104] To this end, UP officials credited a spike in numbers arrested in late 1932, for example, to "rumors of an impending amnesty [that] are producing the usual crop of candidates for a cheap and short lived martyrdom."[105]

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[100] Bengal Report, August 1932, L/P&J/12/720/48; Bengal Report, September 1932, L/P&J/12/720/54.

[101] UP Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/729/2.

[102] UP Report, March 1932, L/P&J/12/729/22.

[103] Punjab Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/728/2.

[104] For similar references to an Indian reluctance to face the consequences of open agitation, see UP Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/729/2; Assam Report, February 1932, L/P&J/12/719/6; Bombay Report, 1/14 May 1932, L/P&J/12/722/34; Bombay Report, 17/31 May 1932, L/P&J/12/722/39–40.

[105] UP Report, January 1933, L/P&J/12/740/2.

The decrease in Congress activity thus credited not only to active repression, but to characteristic Indian temerity, the only thing left for the Raj to explain was that agitation which did continue, especially in the first four months of 1932. There was, across the Indian administration, a fairly standard explanation: these were the actions of poor and marginalized Indians who received some compensation from Congress for participating.[106] Variations on this theme recurred throughout India, from the U.P. to Bombay, Bengal and Delhi.[107] Such a characterization of these Congress actions allowed the administration to argue simultaneously for a loss of middle-class support for the movement and for such a lack of respect for the party that even the lower orders would only support it if paid. The widespread reliance of colonial authorities on this particular trope, however, seems problematic, and not just because it seemed to recur again and again. In some provinces officials claimed there were actual payments, but in others – as in the example from Bengal above – such a link between action and compensation was simply alleged.[108] As most reports tended toward the latter, hazier variety, and as the colonial bureaucracy already possessed a predilection for generalization when faced with the unexpected, it seems likely that assertions of Congress payment were either unfounded or, potentially, a reaction to the Congress campaign in late 1931 to establish volunteer training centers throughout the country. These camps for the Hindustani Seva Dal did indeed feed volunteers and also produced paid workers to organize party support in the countryside, but the Congress was not in much of a position by late 1931 or early 1932 to pay off thousands of demonstrators, as the British had claimed in Banares. That Banares was itself home to such a facility seems much more likely an explanation for the support achieved there. Nehru, moreover, spent much of late 1931 concerned that some training centers were spending far too much on food – "some hundreds of rupees on milk alone" – and thus limiting the numbers who could attend.[109] These financial constraints, plus Nehru's earlier admonition to provincial Congress organizations that "we cannot pay our volunteers or attract them in any way except by the lure of national service and sacrifices," further reduced the likelihood of paying marchers.[110]

Some officials did temper their assessments of a declining Congress however. Opposition to Congress tactics, like civil disobedience and rent strikes, did not mean that Indians might not "sympathize with much of what the Congress stand

106 See the descriptions of such activities in fn. 84 and 85.

107 For this last, see Delhi Report, 31 January 1932, L/P&J/12/725/3.

108 The Bombay government claimed that even a payment of up to a rupee a day was not enough to attract volunteers (Bombay Report, 17/31 May 1932, L/P&J/12/722/39–40).

109 Nehru to N.D. Vashishta, 12 October 1931, *SWJN*, vol. 6, p. 229.

110 Nehru to Provincial Congress Committees (circular letter), 9 April 1931, *SWJN*, vol. 6, pp. 240–241.

for, and therefore give little active support to the measures taken against it."[111] Furthermore, although colonial officers believed that their swift action in early 1932 had surprised the Congress and caught its leaders off-guard, there was also at least one indication that the party had had inside information on the coming crackdown: the U.P. government reported in January that efforts to seize bank accounts associated with Congress had come up empty, the accounts having been cashed out days before "in every case."[112] In Bombay, which Willingdon considered still a "black spot" of political activity in early 1932, the local government warned New Delhi not to rely on the "outward calm which prevails," as Congress remained active "in the background" issuing "unauthorized patrikas, bulletins and leaflets" especially in Bombay City.[113] An inquiry into Indian public opinion, initiated by Willingdon and comprised of reports from local officials throughout the country, concluded that Congress still had great support among Indian merchants, although, tellingly, this analysis credited much of that loyalty to these traders' sense of affinity with Gandhi as a fellow *bania* or Gujarati.[114] Even the news that a high proportion of Congress detainees were illiterate (75 per cent in UP by a 1932 report) was not entirely reassuring. It might mean that Congress had had to rely on unknowing dupes, as some administrators saw it, but it also, Sumit Sarkar has noted, showed "the extent to which Congress had become a real mass movement."[115] As Sapru outlined to a friend in London, the repressive ordinances in India had rendered "the angry demonstrations and large-scale defiances of law … less frequent than they were," but that "[t]he stream of people to go to jail has not however dried up. They are still going there at some places in large numbers[,] at others in small numbers."[116] Perhaps the best evidence for some administrative concern, however, was the intensification of government-sponsored and produced anti-Congress propaganda in the first few months of 1932, designed to counter Congress claims and to prevent any sympathy for the party from growing among non-Congress Indians who might be alarmed by the repressive measures taken by the government. Provincial governments provided mobile film vans and village radio broadcasting, and the India Office was keen on paying local Indian papers to run British-produced articles touting all that the Raj had brought to India.[117] Willingdon, with an eye on expenses, thought that

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111 UP Report, January 1932, L/P&J/12/729/5.

112 Ibid.

113 Willingdon quote from Sarkar, Modern India, p. 322; Bombay Report, 16 February/4 March 1932, L/P&J/12/722/10.

114 Low, *Eclipse of Empire*, pp. 110–114.

115 Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 321; UP Report, March 1932, L/P&J/12/729/28; see also UP weekly reports on civil disobedience at L/P&J/7/293.

116 Sapru to Graham Pole, 12 June 1932, SP 1/G.

117 For the entire file on these propaganda efforts, see L/P&J/7/121.

non-Congress politicians ought to acquire a "little courage" and do this work themselves.[118] On the other hand, the Bengal provincial administration made a rather remarkable proposal in June 1932 for a program of economic aid and development in the region, including an increase in qualified teachers and an expansion of opportunities for young women, who were seen as significant in countering sympathy and support for violent actions.[119] Lurking behind all of this activity was the fear, as at least one report put it, that if the repressive measures ceased "agitation will immediately break out."[120] Notably, however, one influential Briton thought that the Gandhian campaign had reached its end in early 1932, "not due merely to the fact that the leaders have been imprisoned [nor] entirely due to the action taken under the Ordinances." Instead, "even before [the ordinances] were introduced, there were many evidences [sic] that people generally were tired of joining in a kind of demonstration which had twice before been attempted and had brought them nothing in return." This was the view of Malcolm Hailey, addressed to Samuel Hoare.[121]

The India Office and the government in New Delhi both sought to profit from the removal of Congress from the political scene, and thus mooted potential measures for rapid political concessions in the hope of attracting Indian attention away from Congress and bolstering the position of those "moderate" politicians who remained free.[122] Willingdon contemplated the possibility of bringing in a federation of British India only if the princes did not agree to come to terms. Hoare thought this idea "the worst of all worlds," as it would mean Indian self-government which did not include the "conservative" princes on whom he counted. In any event such a plan would never survive the "maximum opposition from British opinion."[123] By March 1932 Hoare had brought the weight of the entire Cabinet against Willingdon's proposal and effectively killed it.[124] In February 1932 Hoare himself flirted with the possibility of granting provincial autonomy

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118 Willingdon to Hoare, 8 February 1931, L/P&J/7/121; for a similar sentiment by the UP government, see UP Report, March 1932, L/P&J/12/729/28.

119 Sir Frederick Jackson memorandum, June 1932, IOR R/3/2/67.

120 UP Report, February 1932, L/P&J/12/729/16.

121 Hailey to Hoare, 28 February 1932, copy at Mss. Simon 71/146–154. Hoare had forwarded Hailey's letter to others in the Cabinet on 11 March 1932.

122 Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 80–81.

123 Hoare to Garvin, 30 November 1931, Ransome Center Garvin Papers (University of Texas),Garvin Mss.; Hoare to Willingdon, 28 January 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/151–160; Hoare to Hailey, 9 February 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/15/151–155; Hoare to Butler, 19 February 1932, RAB G4/6–8.

124 Hoare to Willingdon, 18 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/218–229; Hoare to Butler, 1 April 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14a/3–4; Hoare to Davidson, 1 April 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14a/56–57; Simon to Hoare, 29 December 1932, Simon Mss. 75/47–48.

quickly as an "interim move" to consolidate the non-Congress groups in India.[125] To Findlater Stewart, such a concession would attract the support of naturally grasping politicians: "The Bengali is an emotional creature with a bad inferiority complex … Anything which goes to persuade him that great opportunities are open to him is all to the good."[126] Writing to Hoare, Hailey shared a similar sentiment: "I believe myself that the great body of moderate people in the province, such as the lawyers and others who sympathize with Congress but are not extreme in views, would be greatly attracted by the prospects which Provincial Autonomy would open to them." Sapru might not like such a step, Hailey noted, but he and his "all-India" colleagues "would be unlikely to come into our Provincial Councils in any case."[127] The problem with introducing provincial autonomy alone, even with a promise of federation to come, was that, for political reasons in Parliament, it required "some backing for the step in India itself."[128]

In the spring of 1932 Sapru and his close colleagues were not about to support a plan that did not provide explicitly for a federal India. As Sapru put it, "It is clear to my mind that if we do not get an All India Federation we shall not get responsibility at the centre."[129] Convinced that Hoare wished to put provincial autonomy as a separate first step, both Sapru and Jayakar had to cut through a thicket of information as well. Sapru believed, at least for a while, that he would have "to fight" the "Delhi bureaucracy" to gain the federal plan outlined in 1930, and he was hardly reassured by K.N. Haksar's contention that even the Viceroy was now "extremely keen on the consummation of the Federal Constitution."[130] Lord Lothian, in India as the head of the committee on expanding the Indian franchise, stressed to Sapru in late March that "Hoare was very keen on the establishment of the proposed Federation" as the only way to get Indian reform past the Tory party.[131] Jayakar doubted Lothian's assessment of Hoare's enthusiasm, and Sapru too remained wary of Hoare's and Willingdon's true affection for the federal plan.[132] A frustrated Sapru argued that "[t]he constant repetition by Sir Samuel Hoare and the Government of India of the dual policy

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125 Hoare to Sykes, 23 February 1932, Cambridge University Library Templewood Papers, VII/4.

126 Findlater Stewart to Anderson, 9 March 1932, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/2–5.

127 Hailey to Hoare, 28 February 1932, copy at Mss. Simon 71/146–154.

128 Hoare to Anderson, 22 April 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/9/4–7.

129 Sapru to Jayakar, 21 March 1932, SP (second series) 2/J; Sapru to S.M. Bose, 23 January 1932, SP 1/B.

130 Sapru to Jayakar, 21 March 1932, SP 2/J; Haksar to Sapru, 28 March 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 203–204.

131 Sapru to Jayakar, 4 April 1932, SP 2/J.

132 Jayakar to Sapru, 7 April 1932, SP 2/J; Jayakar to Sapru, 12 April 1932, SP 2/J; Sapru to Haksar, 30 April 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 207–208.

of the [sic] progress and order is sickening. We are having neither order nor progress."[133] He had heard that "some high placed men in India think that once Provincial Autonomy is established, people will forget about responsibility at the centre."[134] As an assessment of British intentions, it was not far off.

With little support in India for provincial autonomy alone, Hoare framed a different approach in June 1932, one designed to appease both Indian and Conservative opinion. He announced that that although there would be only one India bill, there would be no set time period between provincial autonomy and the inauguration of federation; furthermore, he emphasized that a joint committee of both Houses would examine the White Paper before any official Bill emerged. However, based on his reading of party feeling, Hoare threw another bone to his backbenchers, declaring that there would be no more consultation with Indian opinion until after the White Paper appeared; Britain, not India, would make policy, and there would be no third Round Table Conference in the fall of 1932.[135] Sapru had received some information to this effect earlier in June from "reliable friends in England and in India," but he still felt the impact of this announcement keenly.[136] Along with Jayakar, he resigned from the Indian Consultative Committee, the group charged with continuing reform discussions with the British outside the Round Table meetings.[137] Hoare, claiming that Sapru had been "extraordinarily difficult the whole way through the proceedings," saw little problem with the Indian's resignation, as he believed that Sapru had "now much less following than he has ever had before in India."[138] However, other British officials, especially Hailey, were not as dismissive of non-Congress influence in India and thus viewed Sapru's action with more concern. These administrators seemed more likely to take seriously the opinion Sapru had voiced in resigning from the negotiations:

> I do not deny the right of Government to reject the opinion of Moderates and to hold that they do not count in the internal politics of the country, but I very respectfully venture to submit that the existence of the Moderates has made all the difference in the situation to Government and the Congress alike.[139]

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[133] Sapru to Jayakar, 1 May 1932, SP 2/J.

[134] Sapru to Joseph Bhore, 2 June 1932, SP 1/B.

[135] Hoare to Willingdon, 5, 19, 27 May 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/311–317, 324–332; Hoare to Garvin, 19 July 1932, Garvin Mss.

[136] Sapru to Graham Pole, 12 June 1932, SP 1/G.

[137] Sapru to G.T. Garratt, 3 July 1932, SP 1/G.

[138] Hoare to Macdonald, 20 June 1932, copy at Simon Mss. 72/103–105; see also Hoare to Garvin, 30 June 1932, Garvin Mss.

[139] Sapru to Sankey, 10 July 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 214–215.

Hailey alternated between despondence and optimism in his assessment of British India's future, lamenting at one point the government's failure to cultivate a party "that will combine in an effective way against the forces which now move Congress," and reckoning at another that "circumstances are proving to the people of India at large that constitutional courses are of less avail than direct action."[140] He continued to stress the somewhat amorphous political influence enjoyed by those "moderates" like Sapru and Jayakar: "[T]hey have no pronounced following and would not in some cases be successful in an open election (especially if opposed by Congress) yet actually they have a great deal of influence in the country. They indicate at all events the way in which the opinions of large numbers of educated people will turn."[141] Hailey circulated his sentiment throughout India, and back to London too, emphasizing in particular the impact these Indians had had in supporting the boycott of the Simon Commission in 1928.[142] The existence of such sentiment indeed belied Sapru's own judgment that "the high and mighty in India" had completely discounted the non-Congress politicians.[143]

What might have rankled Sapru and Jayakar, however, was the conclusion of Hailey and Willingdon that the formers' resignations were not the product of serious political or constitutional disagreement, but were merely expressions of personal pique and even jealousy. Hailey believed that Sapru resented the loss of the "limelight" a third conference would provide, while the Viceroy saw the Indians' motivation in their "personal dislike of Sam Hoare."[144] Whatever the reason for Sapru's resignation, though, both men were eager to see this section of Indian opinion reassured and pressed Hoare to do so, despite the Indian Secretary's own claim that "[e]very mail brings me more letter[s] from Indians, other than the small section of Indian Liberals, strongly approving of the programme that I have announced."[145] Sapru and Jayakar, still cognizant themselves that Indian reform needed to go beyond provincial autonomy, were also making efforts to reinsert themselves into the process. Jayakar saw every benefit in continuing to negotiate with the British, stating that non-cooperation was no alternative: "I

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140 Hailey to Haig, 21 June 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24b/274–280; Hailey to Dawson, 2 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/293–299. According to another official, Hailey was "defeatist" by mid-1932. (Quoted in Cell, Hailey, p. 199)

141 Hailey to Irwin, 14 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.200/24c/329–331.

142 Hailey to Willingdon, 17 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/334–336; Hailey to Keane (Governor of Assam), 23 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/348–355; Hailey to Chelmsford, 28 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/378–382; UP Report, July 1932, L/P&J/12/729/62–63.

143 Sapru to Graham Pole, 10 July 1932, SP 1/G.

144 Hailey to Dawson, 2 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/293–299; Willingdon to Hailey, 15 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/332; Hailey to Willingdon, 17 July 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24c/334–336.

145 Hoare to Garvin, 19 July 1932, Garvin Mss.; Hoare to Willingdon, 5 August 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/384–390. See also Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, pp. 250–261.

do not propose to commit political hari-kari, because Gandhi has chosen to go to jail and render myself impotent."[146] An Indian newspaper proprietor, J.P. Srivastava, acted as a sort of intermediary for Sapru, relaying to Hailey the gist of conversations between the two Indians in early August 1932. Srivastava found Sapru "suspicious" of British intentions, but not entirely put off the prospect of a return to negotiations. The key, according to Srivastava, was "to show [Sapru] a door through which he can come in again."[147] Furthermore, Hailey learned, Sapru pledged that he "would not give any support to non-cooperation" and that he also believed that "the Congress are anxious to terminate the present impasse, but it is their prestige which is preventing them from taking the initiative."[148] By the end of August, Hoare, aware that a reform plan with little Indian support would never make it through Parliament, changed course and invited Indian representatives to a third London conference in the fall.[149]

To Hailey, the acquiescence to one further conference allowed the British to stabilize their support among at least one body of Indian opinion. As he explained to Findlater Stewart at the India Office, his conversations with various Indians had left him with the impression that "though they may criticize in detail, they are really in a mood to accept something a good deal short of what they have hitherto claimed, so long as it were in a form which could be proclaimed as a really substantial advance." Hailey added, referring to a perceived Indian political timidity, that the "nearer we get to the actual introduction of a new constitution the more cautious they seem to become."[150] Stewart, one of Hoare's chief advisers in London, had heard a similar sentiment earlier that year from the commanding general of the Indian Army, who believed that Indian officers would "make good troop leaders but bad squadron commanders. There is a loss of nerve at the prospect of promotion exams and of wider responsibilities."[151] Conversely, Sapru remained unsure as to the true positions of those on the British side, especially Willingdon, who was "all things to all men," and others in the central Indian bureaucracy. "If there is an atom of truth in what my friends write to me from England," Sapru noted, "then it follows that the real die-hardism is at Simla and not at Whitehall."[152] As he put it to another colleague, "My dear

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146 Jayakar to Sapru, 6 August 1932, SP 2/J.

147 J.P. Srivastava to Hailey, 6 August 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24d/416–418.

148 Srivastava to Hailey, 11 August 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24d/436–439.

149 For his reflection that a lack of Indian support would play into the Die Hards' hands, see Hoare to Anderson, 26 August 1932, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/126–129. On the conference, see Sapru to Sankey, 4 September 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 218.

150 Hailey to Findlater Stewart, 26 September 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/52a/7. For a similar sentiment, see Hailey to de Montmorency, 12 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/50–53.

151 Philip Chetwode to Findlater Stewart, 11 May 1932, Mss. Eur. d.714/17/96–101.

152 Sapru to Haksar, 5 October 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 222–224.

Bajpai[,] let me tell you frankly that I am not in love with the Government of India and I have lost all faith in its professions."[153] Nevertheless, Sapru remained fairly convinced that he still had some influence in British circles – the existence of the third Round Table Conference seemed to testify to that. Both he and Jayakar had noticed in their discussions with Hoare and other officials: that the British negotiators were very taken with these Indian "moderates" whom they believed to be real arbiters of Indian political opinion.[154] The two Indian leaders also took note of the favorable way in which Indian Liberals and others of a similar bent were portrayed in the British and Anglo-Indian press, Jayakar noting that even in India, the Editor of the *Times of India* had largely placed his editorial columns "at our disposal."[155]

Princes and Untouchables

While Indian "moderate" politicians and colonial officials tried each to figure out what the other thought, both sides also occupied themselves in 1932 with trying to decipher the true feelings of the Indian princes towards the federation they had initially supported. The apparent unanimity with which the princes had at first welcomed federation had disappeared after the second Round Table.[156] Early in 1932 a British delegation, led by the Tory M.P. J.C.C. Davidson, arrived in India to survey the situation of the princely states, in keeping with procedures begun at the Round Table talks. Davidson, an experienced political hand, but a newcomer to India, posted near-daily reports to London on his progress, or lack thereof, in convincing the princes that their interests lay in joining an Indian federation. It was not a selfless policy. Hoare in fact acknowledged of his own party that "they will want a lot of convincing that the Princes are really coming in," and that without a detailed settlement with the princes "we cannot convince the [Tory] doubters that All India Federation is practical politics."[157] Davidson's

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153 Sapru to G.S. Bajpai, 12 October 1932, SP 1/B. In fact, Willingdon, as we have seen, may have at times been more liberal in his ideas of Indian reform than Hoare. The problem was that the Viceroy had developed an almost visceral dislike of Sapru, one which the latter no doubt sensed. See Willingdon to Harcourt Butler, 4 August 1933, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/58–59.

154 Sapru to Jayakar, 18 August 1932; Jayakar to Sapru, 21 August 1932, SP 2/J.

155 Jayakar to Sapru, 9 September 1932, SP 2/J. Sapru's continued suspicion that the British did not entirely value his work remained, and resembled in some way the experience of his contemporary, the Indian nobleman and cricketer Ranjitsinhji, who despite success and acclaim in England, Satadru Sen notes, "discovered that there was always a gap between the imperial state and the 'black citizen.'" S. Sen, *Migrant races: empire, identity and K.S. Ranjit Sinhji* (Manchester, 2004), p. 131.

156 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 105–112.

157 Hoare to Willingdon, 9 June 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/339.

delegation found the princes and their representatives, especially Akbar Hydari of Hyderabad, "lukewarm" and certainly in no rush to join a federal India without extensive protection of their prerogatives.[158] Davidson himself was adamantly opposed to any two-stage approach to Indian reform and eager to get the princes involved in federation, telling another colleague then in India that there was "great danger" in any delay between provincial autonomy and federation for the time-lag "would give the opportunity which many of the Princes would like for them to procrastinate."[159] He also warned the Viceroy that "All-India Federation is impossible without the Princes and speed is of paramount importance."[160]

However, Hoare and Willingdon were not convinced that princely opposition was either serious or grounded in fundamental objections to federation itself. Hoare felt, with some reason, that diehard elements within the Government of India and their allies (like the *Morning Post*'s India correspondent, Madhava Rao) were conspiring to frighten the princes away from federation.[161] Both men also shared the belief that the princes were merely angling for better terms and were posturing as a negotiating tool, Willingdon telling Hoare that the princes thought "that their best hope of obtaining what they want lies in repeating continuously their maximum demands. The longer they continue to negotiate regarding Federation the more inevitable becomes their ultimate adhesion, provided a scheme emerges admitted by unbiased outsiders to be reasonable."[162] Even Davidson had made a similar report to Hoare in early 1932.[163] Lothian was able to report that moderate Indian politicians had assured him that the princes would eventually give in.[164] Also it appeared that the largest princely states, including Hyderabad and Mysore, had not joined the opposition led by the medium-sized states.[165] Hoare's major concern, then, was not that his scheme was in real danger from the princes, but that the princes' attempts to use the federal question to lobby for their own more localized issues would create the wrong impression in London, lending credence to the growing Die Hard argument that federation should be abandoned as the princes had no interest in it, which

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158 Davidson to Baldwin, 2 February 1932, House of Lords Record Office Davidson Papers, JCCD 195; Davidson to Hoare, 3 February 1932, JCCD 196.

159 Davidson to Lothian, 28 April 1932, Mss. Eng. hist. c.557/112–115.

160 Davidson to Willingdon, 28 April 1932, JCCD 194.

161 Willingdon telegram 388 to Hoare, 23 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/108; Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 113–143.

162 Willingdon telegram 88S to Hoare, 9 February 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14a/8–9; Hoare to Willingdon, 5 February 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/161–173.

163 Davidson to Hoare, 27 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14a/91–92.

164 Lothian to Hoare, 11 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14b/191–199; see also Davidson to Lloyd, 21 April 1932, JCCD 194; Lothian to Hoare, 30 April 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14b/245–251.

165 Davidson to Lloyd, 15 March 1932, JCCD 194; Willingdon telegram 281S to Hoare, 26 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/63; Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 105–106.

would thus leave a new Indian central government without the desired conservative check they would have provided.[166] Hoare therefore decided that the best plan of attack for the moment was to keep the princes from rejecting federation outright, telling Davidson that he did not mind wrangling over differences with the princes "so long as their cumulative effect is not to make the Princes give a definite negative to Federation."[167] One way to proceed was to keep in constant dialogue with the princes, reminding them that their best defense against radical Congress policies, like the demand for representative government in the princely states, was to federate as quickly as possible and prevent British India from organizing itself in opposition to the states.[168] This was the government's ace card, for as Davidson observed, the princes "are terrified of British India."[169] Hoare's complementary approach was to meet some of the princes' smaller demands, in the belief that these, not any deep-seated hostility to federation, were at the root of princely antagonism. Ian Copland has detailed Hoare's efforts to settle many of the minor territorial and financial complaints of the princes, like Hyderabad's claim to Berar and the tribute which Mysore paid to the Raj.[170] Of course, Hoare could not meet the princes' demand for a resolution, or elimination, of the paramountcy question, that is, the ability of Britain to interfere in the internal affairs of the states. However, Hoare again did not see this as the real sticking-point; in fact, he seems to have reflected on it very little, confident that his piecemeal concessions addressed the real reasons for princely agitation.[171] Upon first embarking on this quest to settle small disputes with the princes, Hoare had predicted that these settlements would "have an effect upon the princes out of all proportion to the magnitude of the [actual disputes]."[172] In this assumption he was actually encouraged by his India Office advisers, like Findlater Stewart, who maintained that paramountcy was only really an issue with some of the smaller royals, not with "the *great* princes" whom many of the states would follow into federation.[173] Davidson, whose swings of opinion on future princely

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166 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 February 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/607–613.

167 Hoare to Davidson, 10 March 1932, JCCD 196.

168 Hoare to Lord Hastings, 22 February 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14a/125–127; Hoare to Lothian, 3 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14b/148–152; Hoare to Willingdon, 28 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/66.

169 Davidson to Hoare, 6 March 1932, JCCD 196.

170 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 104–105; Ian Copland, "The Hyderabad (Berar) Agreement of 1933: A Case Study in Anglo-Indian Diplomacy," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 6 (1978), pp. 281–299.

171 Hoare to Willingdon, 20 October 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/508–511.

172 Hoare to Willingdon, 16 October 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/38–46.

173 Stewart to Hoare, 15 August 1932, L/PO/5/3/134–135; for Hoare's impression that the anti-paramountcy group was not representative of the princes as a whole, see Hoare's comments throughout an entire India Office file on the issue from September 1932 (L/PO/5/18). See also Davidson to Lloyd, 11 April 1932, JCCD 194.

actions demonstrated the imprecise information he had gathered, predicted that the large states, "in their heart of hearts," would agree to any federal system which was "reasonable and just," and reported that the princes were mainly concerned in effecting legislation which would deter "attempts in British India to incite disaffection against the States."[174]

The federal plan received a boost in early April 1932 at a meeting of the Indian princes. After some serious lobbying by Davidson and Willingdon, and complex negotiation between pro- and anti-federation princes, the Chamber of Princes, representing all but the largest states, resolved in favor of federation, but demanded even more safeguards for their autonomy as their condition for accession.[175] Despite this indication that many of the states were concerned over their rights under a federation, many of the reports which reached Hoare from India gave the impression that the plan would now sail through, on account of the "favorable atmosphere" which had surrounded the princes' discussions.[176] Both Willingdon and Hailey felt that the princes had approved of federation "in principle," and Lothian told Hoare to "go straight ahead with your Bill."[177] As a recent history of the princely states has concluded, Hoare and his colleagues were not wrong in believing that the princes had embraced the federal plan; they were however too confident in the "surface unambiguity" of the princes' agreement.[178] Given the inconsistencies that plagued the British view of India, it is not perhaps surprising that these colonial officials saw the princes as always bargaining, but then again sometimes not.

Hoare soon threw himself into refining the agreement with the princes, seeking to address whatever princely criticisms of the scheme remained, clearly suggesting that federation remained his real object. Soon after the princes' meeting, he queried Willingdon as to what issues remained outstanding, especially with regard to the distribution of princely seats in the new federal legislature, and what were the princes "expecting us to do?"[179] Unsurprisingly, Davidson's report on the princes' status under federation, which appeared in June 1932, and

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174 Davidson to Hoare, 22 April 1932, JCCD 196; "Record of Meeting between States Representatives and Representatives of His Majesty's Government," 2 December 1932, JCCD 198.

175 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 107–112; Davidson to Baldwin, 28 March 1932, JCCD 195; Lothian to Hoare, 27 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14b/212–221

176 Willingdon telegram to Hoare, 3 May 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/11b/164–165. In his message, the Viceroy also indicated his belief that the princes would accept a distribution of federal seats drawn up by the India Office.

177 Willingdon to Baldwin, 13 April 1932, SB 105/175–176; Hailey to Hoare, 21 April 1932, Templewood VII/1/19; Lothian to Hoare, 3 April 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/14b/226–230. Hailey was not so sanguine in his assessment of the princes' entry to the federation in a letter to Dawson though: Hailey to Dawson, 7 May 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24a/18–28.

178 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 111–112.

179 Hoare telegram 1121 to Willingdon, 15 April 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/11a/160.

must certainly have reflected Hoare's own desire to settle these issues, was very generous to many of the rulers, suggesting the reduction of the tax burdens of many of the larger states and the easing of commercial and customs regulations as well.[180] Hoare pressed Willingdon too to keep up communication with the princes.[181] The Indian Secretary paid particular attention to Hyderabad's claim to Berar, identifying this as the key issue which would bring the Nizam around to public support of federation.[182] At the close of the third Round Table Conference, Hoare felt that "there was a very good feeling" between Britain and the states, whose representatives had left London "particularly pleased."[183] The eventual White Paper of March 1933 showed the depth of Hoare's sustained interest in getting the princes into federation: it increased the number of federal seats for the princes from the plan discussed at the Round Tables, and promised as well that British officials in India would continue to safeguard the "rights of any Indian state" against any threat from the British Indian part of the federation.[184] Throughout 1932 and early 1933, Hoare did not despair of ever seeing federation in India, but proceeded under the assumption that the resolution of localized princely grievances, and the impact of some small concessions in what he saw as an "Oriental" style of bargaining,[185] would remove any obstacles to the princes' accession to a federal structure.

Sapru's interest in the actions of the princes was considerable, as their approval was vital to the passage of the reforms, the only way in which India would gain central responsible government. Like those on the British side, Sapru relied on others, including friends in the Indian government, for information. In letters to British administrators and politicians, Sapru remained positive that the princes would come around to the federal idea.[186] In discussions with other Indians, however, Sapru was not as confident. His conviction that Willingdon and his advisers in New Delhi aimed to scuttle any real reform included a suspicion

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180 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 117–119.

181 Hoare to Willingdon, 11 August and 14 September 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/391–394, 417–421.

182 Hoare to Willingdon, 28 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/566–572; Hoare to Willingdon, 10 February 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/599–606.

183 Hoare to Willingdon, 28 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/566–572.

184 Quoted in Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 123.

185 In regard to Hoare's perception of princely diplomacy, see the report of an India Office meeting of 24 January 1934, in which Hoare predicted that "Oriental traditions of bargaining will inevitably involve [the Princes'] holding their hands until the last possible moment." Copy of report at Davidson Bodleian Papers, Mss. Eng. hist. c.566/23–30.

186 Sapru to Sankey, 10 April 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 204–206; Sapru to Jayakar, 4 April 1932, SP 2/J. For Sapru's description of such a reassurance he had made to the Viceroy, see Sapru to the Nawab of Bhopal, 12 January 1932, SP 1/H; also see: Sapru to Jayakar, 12 February 1932, SP 1/J.

that the Viceroy was trying to "induce" the princes away from federation.[187] He sensed that the princes themselves would not be able "to stick to any decision for any length of time" which led him to take "a very gloomy view of the whole future."[188] Indeed, by the end of 1932, at the conclusion of the third Round Table Conference, Sapru thought that Hyderabad no longer wanted "to come into the Federation" and that Hydari, the Hyderabad representative, was now "positively obstructive and reactionary."[189]

In the late summer of 1932, just before the third Round Table was to meet, British officials were confident in more than just their assessment of the princes' support of federation. Many were also heartened by the events that followed the announcement of the Communal Award that gave separate electorates to Muslims, as well as guaranteed majorities in provinces like Bengal and the Punjab, a development which R.J. Moore has pointed to as securing Muslim support for the federal plan.[190] The fact that the British Government had had to outline this agreement at all reinforced the notion that implacable religious hostilities marked Indian society. The emergence of violent Hindu and Sikh protests in the Punjab and Bengal against the Award no doubt bolstered this colonial impression as well. However, a further aspect of the Award, and especially the Indian reaction to it, attracted immense British interest, for it seemed to lend even greater credence to the colonial suspicion that religious practice separated not only Hindu from Muslim, but even Hindu from Hindu.

The Award was, in fact, something of a triumph for Indian untouchables and their spokesman, B.R. Ambedkar, as it bestowed the status of a separate electorate upon this community, dividing it from the larger Hindu voting populace. As the U.P. Government noted shortly after the announcement of the Award, the real concern was not Hindu reaction against the provision of Muslim electorates, but rather "whether the mass of orthodox Hindu opinion in the province can be roused into active feeling on the subject of the treatment of the depressed classes."[191] The situation grew more complicated in September as Gandhi declared his opposition to what he saw as an attempt to disunite Hindus, and then launched a fast in protest of such a separate electorate for untouchables and in support of a program of reform within Hinduism generally. Gandhi's action caused consternation in both India and Britain, uniting all sides in a desire to prevent the

187 Jayakar to Sapru, 28 September 1932, SP 2/J; Sapru to Jayakar, 1 March 1933, SP 2/J.

188 Sapru to Haksar, 30 April and 20 May 1932, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 207–209; for further expression of this sentiment, see: Sapru to Bajpai, 17 October 1932, SP 1/B.

189 Sapru to B.N. Gurtu and H. Kunzru, 25 November and 8 December 1932, SP 1/B.

190 Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 262.

191 UP Report, August 1932, L/P&J/12/729/72.

Mahatma's demise, and the repercussions that would surely follow from it.[192] The Poona Pact of late September 1932, between Gandhi and Ambedkar, resolved the situation by substituting reserved seats for untouchables in place of the Award's decision to make untouchables a separate electorate. Gandhi was not finished with the question of untouchability though, and made the Pact a first step in a new campaign for "Harijan" uplift that consumed most of his energies into 1933. This drive to eliminate caste privilege within Hinduism and to open temples and other accommodations to untouchables was not unanimously popular among Hindus, however, a development that colonial administrators noticed with great interest. Hailey argued to the Viceroy that the new campaign might alienate high-caste Hindus from Gandhi, and thus Congress itself.[193] There was also the sense that Gandhi's program would not even attract much untouchable support, "whether on account of [untouchable] suspicion or more probably apathy," and that Muslims were suspicious of the Harijan campaign as a ploy to increase the political power of Congress.[194]

These predictions seemed to hold up, for although there was an initial surge of enthusiasm to embrace anti-untouchability, it soon waned, leaving untouchables still barred from many temples, socially ostracized and somewhat regretful over their decision to align with Gandhi.[195] Provincial governments reported to New Delhi of a "slackening of effort" in the Harijan campaign and of the "uneasy" reception many "caste Hindus" gave to these reforms.[196] Orthodox Hindu groups like the RSS were beginning to attract sizeable crowds to their protest meetings, like the thousand who gathered at Nagpur in mid-October.[197] There was also significant opposition in Bengal, where the Pact's provision of further seats for untouchables enraged high-caste Hindus already angry that the Communal Award had left them barely in the minority in the province.[198] Discontent appeared not only among high-caste Hindus though; untouchables too remained wary of this

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[192] For a description of the hectic and heated British discussions over whether to release Gandhi during the fast – so that he would not die in a British jail – see Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter 5.

[193] Hailey to Willingdon, 13 September 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24e/545–549.

[194] UP Report, September 1932, L/P&J/12/729/76. On Muslim suspicions, see also Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*, p. 115.

[195] See Oliver Mendelsohn and Marika Vicziany, *The Untouchables: Subordination, poverty and the state in modern India* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 104–111; Christophe Jaffrelot, *Dr. Ambedkar and Untouchability: Fighting the Indian Caste System* (New York, 2005), pp. 65–71.

[196] Bombay Report, 16/24 October 1932, L/P&J/12/722/82.

[197] CP Report, October 1932, L/P&J/12/724/36; UP Report, October 1932, L/P&J/12/729/79; BPR (Bombay), 16/23 January 1933, L/P&J/12/733/2. See also the weekly police summaries for September 1932 for the United Provinces at L/P&J/7/293.

[198] Chakrabarty, "The Communal Award of 1932," pp. 507–511.

surge in reform interest, at least according to provincial reports, resulting in the "consolidation" of this group in suspicion of Congress' true motives.[199]

The discontent generated in India by the Poona Pact, especially the reaction of caste Hindus to the agreement, featured prominently in provincial and police reports in late 1932, as well as in the correspondence of Indian administrators.[200] Indeed, it continued to do so through 1933 and 1934. It is likely that the caste controversy played to British perceptions about caste and Hindu social unity, or the lack thereof. In its annual report for 1932 to Parliament, for example, the Government of India argued for the Indian verities that had been revealed by the Poona Pact:

> Within the ranks of the caste Hindus – whose cohesion had been one of the remarkable features of the two preceding years – it caused profound dissensions, and made the more conservative-minded look increasingly to Government instead of to the Congress for support.[201]

Yet there may have been no need for such reinforcement for some officials, who in their analyses of these developments revealed an already-formidable belief about the hold that caste had on India; another important aspect of the events of late 1932, then, was that they simply allowed for such a view's exposition or re-airing. From the announcement of the Communal Award onward, officials from the local level through the central administration had expressed, occasionally with hope, the likelihood that the question of untouchables' rights would provoke a severe reaction from the "orthodox" in India. Willingdon had alerted Hoare, in fact, to the benefits of "getting Gandhi involved in untouchability," as it would undoubtedly "rouse strong feeling on both sides and will divert attention from strictly political issues and civil disobedience."[202] Furthermore, these reports tended to denigrate any instances of inter-caste cooperation or amity as short-lived or doomed: one Punjabi D.C. forecast that such anti-untouchability sentiment would be no more than "a nine days' wonder," before the "centuries old social evil"

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199 CP Report, November 1932, L/P&J/12/724/41; Delhi Report, 15 December 1932, L/P&J/12/725/34.

200 See, for example, Hailey to Irwin, 3 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/30–41; Willingdon to Hailey, 30 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/180–181.

201 *India, 1932–33*, Government of India (New Delhi, 1934), p. 11.

202 Willingdon to Hoare, 1 November 1932, quoted in Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 201. This policy of allowing Indian divisions to grow may also have been behind Hoare's admonition to Willingdon six weeks earlier that "we should not ourselves get involved in any way in the controversy between [Gandhi] and the Depressed Classes." Hoare to Willingdon, 22 September 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/422–427.

reasserted itself.[203] There was a marked lack of surprise at the slow progress made by Gandhi's Harijan movement as well. To those who held this view that caste ruled India and blocked real Hindu cooperation, the untouchability controversy was simply an object lesson in Indian reality. Overall, the fractiousness that surrounded the Pact left colonial assumptions about the improbability of Indian political unity either strengthened or, at the very least, intact.

The Last Round Table Conference

Confident that a policy of repression had severely wounded Congress and increasingly convinced that the Poona Pact had caused even further problems for the nationalists, while also somewhat reassured about the Indian princes' acquiescence in the federal plan, Hoare and the India Office welcomed delegates in November to the final Round Table Conference in London.[204] Sapru found among his hosts "the impression that the Congress has been absolutely crushed, though when they speak about Mr. Gandhi, they use very gentle language."[205] Sapru, moreover, thought it imperative that the conference fix a date for the inauguration of federation and resolve remaining questions about safeguards for continued British control of aspects of Indian finance. Concerned that the British were maneuvering to present India with only provincial autonomy in the end, Sapru campaigned vigorously in London to keep the federal plan alive – and thus, according to his plan, to keep Britain moving along the road to greater and greater concessions.[206] As part of this lobbying effort, Sapru and Jayakar met with a variety of British politicians and officials. At dinner with Irwin, Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, the Indians made the case for the likely success of genuine reform. As Irwin noted afterwards:

> [Sapru and Jayakar] were quite ready to admit that there was a great deal of Indian opinion that was very bored with the Civil Disobedience movement, and wanted to be quiet. If the [proposed] Constitution turn[s] out to be reasonable, they anticipated that it would secure the support of all the moderate elements of Congress, which they put at about 50%.

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203 Punjab Report, September 1932, L/P&J/12/728/87.

204 Anderson, in Bengal, had told Hoare after the Poona Pact that the compromise had alienated members of high-caste Bengalis (Chakrabarty, "Communal Award of 1932," p. 507).

205 Sapru to B.N. Gurtu and H. Kunzru, 8 December 1932, SP 1/B.

206 On Sapru's suspicions of British intentions, see Sapru to Bajpai, 17 October 1932, SP 1/B and Sapru to Gurtu, 4 November 1932, SP 1/B.

Irwin continued more cautiously that "[t]hese, no doubt, are calculations which we can all make according to our own taste."[207] Hoare, who had grown frustrated with Sapru's repeated efforts to fix the date of federation and other issues, made his own reckoning.[208] The Indian Secretary refused to alter the federal plan so as to make it "reasonable" to Sapru, apparently relying upon the advice Hailey had given the India Office that "very many [Indian] Liberals will really accept something less than their own more advanced section demands," as well as Irwin's sense that these same Indians' "feet will turn chilly" when they saw an actual federal plan "in cold print."[209] Although the conference ended only with a pledge by the Government to publish a White Paper on the reforms, and to submit that proposal to a Parliamentary Joint Committee, Hoare felt pleased, for he had "the impression that Indian public opinion generally is now resigned to effective safeguards and is prepared to accept a scheme provided that we keep the initiative and do not delay too long about it."[210] The Viceroy and his advisers agreed that the prospects for Indian acceptance of the limited federal scheme were now fairly good, but they were not willing to risk any release of Gandhi or Nehru that might reinvigorate a demoralized Congress and destroy "the confidence of those who have supported us in the long struggle" against that party.[211] Those in New Delhi may have felt that they were saving easily-misguided Indians from themselves, but their caution on freeing Gandhi should also have been a reminder to those like Hoare that any change in the Indian political atmosphere might be more apparent than real.

In contrast, the results of the conference left Sapru disheartened and aware that his influence with Hoare and Willingdon was hardly that which he had enjoyed with the previous Viceroy. The views of Hailey and other colonial officials (whom Sapru derided as the "diehards at Delhi") now seemed to hold much more weight in policy-making circles, leaving Sapru to lament that the British were about to provide India a constitution "which I know will be rejected by even the Moderates."[212] The rather ham-fisted attempts by the Indian customs service to read his letters home did nothing to improve Sapru's mood either, though it did convince him not to send home "any more record of my daily work, partly

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[207] Irwin to Hailey, 25 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/86–91.

[208] Hoare to Willingdon, 18 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/534–538.

[209] Irwin to Hailey, 25 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/86–91.

[210] Hoare to Simon, 30 December 1932, Mss. Simon 75/57–58; see also Hoare to Willingdon, 28 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/566–572.

[211] Note by Haig for Viceroy's Council, 28 December 1932, quoted in Moore, *Crisis of Indian Unity*, p. 289.

[212] Sapru to Haksar, 9 December 1932, SP 1/H; Sapru to Bajpai, 12 January 1933, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 235–236.

because I think it is safer to bring it with me."[213] The final indignity, as well as a further sign of his reduced position in the corridors of power, was the refusal of the Indian Government to allow Sapru and Jayakar to visit Gandhi in Yeravda Jail in January 1933 to provide him details of the conference, lest such an occasion bring the Mahatma back into public attention.[214]

The year 1932 was much more important for the course of British-Indian interactions and policy-making than it might seem at first glance: the imprisonment of the Congress leadership for the entire twelve months; the failure of the third Round Table to settle the specifics of federation; and the reluctance of the princes to commit themselves to any concrete plan – all of these provide an impression of stasis or deadlock. Yet 1932 was pivotal in some significant ways, especially in shaping the tack Hoare and the India Office took in crafting the actual reform legislation between 1933 and 1935. The picture of Indian society and political behavior offered in 1932 by colonial officials and advisers – one featuring haggling princes, timid and grasping politicians, stolid peasants and warring castes remained, and even intensified, over the following three years. The persistence of this vision, as Sapru learned by early 1933, allowed Hoare and his colleagues to make the reform plan even more cautious than the original federal scheme of 1930–1931, as the Indian Secretary, relying on a small group of advisers like Hailey and Findlater Stewart, became more convinced that Congress's power was waning and, even more important, that the Indian "moderates" would ultimately support any reforms the British introduced. With Indian Muslims, the larger princely states and orthodox Hindus already, in Hoare's thinking, on board, the way was clear to reforms more in name than in practice.

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[213] Sapru to Haksar, 25 November 1932, SP 1/H/40; Sapru to Gurtu and Kunzru, 15 December 1932, SP 1/B. The Raj's pursuit of intelligence through mail interception faced the great obstacle of Indian knowledge of the policy. This may have been why Gandhi, Nehru and others often requested face-to-face meetings when imprisoned. For another politician reflecting on his mail being opened, see V.S.S. Sastri to T.R.V. Sastri, 28 February 1931, *Sastri Letters*, p. 211.

[214] Willingdon to Hailey, 30 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/25a/178–181.

Chapter 4
Watching Gandhi: Predicting Indian Political Behavior, 1933–1935

Convinced that a carefully controlled Indian federation was the key to the retention of India, Hoare and the India Office turned, after early 1933, from broadly outlining such a policy to developing, and then shepherding through Parliament, a detailed reform plan. Those who supported such a scheme understood that they faced a fight within the Conservative ranks over it, but Hoare and his advisors were confident that they would win the political battle within the party, not only because they understood how to assuage and divert Tory anger, but also because they believed that conditions in India were such as to allow for even further moderation of the reforms promised to Indians like Sapru at the end of 1932.

Cautious as always, Hoare announced that a Joint Select Committee from both Houses of Parliament would investigate the reform scheme laid out in the White Paper he presented in early 1933. The approval of this body would be further ratification of the federation proposal, and was indeed very likely given Hoare's recruitment to it of senior political figures like Austen Chamberlain and Lord Derby, and even the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Gordon Lang. The majority of the JSC were Conservatives who were either broadly sympathetic to Hoare's plan (like Lang, a confidant of Irwin's, and even Chamberlain) or who understood the value of supporting the party's leaders, and the power of these elites (like, notably, Lord Derby), against the more unstable Conservative rank-and-file. While the JSC might ask for some revisions to the White Paper plan, it was hardly likely to disapprove of it entirely, a situation that suited Hoare quite well, as he understood that having the JSC make some changes would reassure some wavering Conservatives. Furthermore, based on his reading, and that of his advisors, of the Indian situation in 1932, Hoare remained convinced that he could make these alterations without causing resentment in India. Such a belief also prevailed in British administrative and policymaking circles from 1933 through the passage of the India Act in 1935.

Congress and Non-Cooperation

Predictions about Indian political behavior in the period between the publication of the White Paper and the enactment of the India Act proceeded on similar lines to earlier forecasts. Colonial officials and administrators, in India and in London,

continued to emphasize India's internal divisions, Indian political and moral character and the importance of local over national perspectives there. Also as before, events in India seemed to accord, though often superficially, with such readings. Compared to 1930 or 1931, however, there were far fewer laments by officials that they lacked good information or reliable contacts. The repression of most Congress activities, and the removal of the most dynamic nationalist figures from public view, seemed to have returned rural India in particular to its "real" condition. A reduction in political ferment meant a decrease in officials' anxiety about trying to absorb and explain everything they encountered; there was simply much less on which to report. Colonial opinion focused on a few developments in particular for they might say about Indian political life; these included: the decision of the Congress to re-enter electoral politics, Gandhi's campaign against untouchability, and the debates among the Indian princes over their own accession to a new federal state. For Sapru, and other Indian political insiders, British speculation over the meaning of these developments continued to provide an opportunity for these non-Congress types to shape or direct colonial decision-making. In the case of Sapru, however, it became apparent by the end of 1934 that he may have convinced Hoare and others of Indian amenability too successfully.

At the conclusion of the 1932 Round Table Conference, Hailey believed that Sapru and his fellow "moderates" remained committed to supporting the federal scheme and, as men "who hold property," much less likely to make common cause with a Congress that, under Nehru's direction, was moving towards socialism.[1] In India, it appeared to officials that, with Gandhi and others again imprisoned, the nationalist movement was losing ground. There were some reports of protests on 26 January 1933, a declared "Independence Day," but there were no significant demonstrations and provincial governments saw the few larger crowds as mostly made up of "sight-seers."[2] The dispersal of Congress workers from some rural areas in U.P. left "villagers … at a loss at what to do."[3] Bengal officials reported that "practically no interest was taken" in the region, and even in Calcutta, at the Congress effort to hold its annual meeting in that city. Of course, such an assessment followed the provincial government's mass arrest of delegates who tried to reach Calcutta for the gathering.[4] The consensus emerging in the colonial administration was that the Congress, and the Indian population, had had enough of civil disobedience and were ready to re-enter politics.[5] This assessment fitted

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1 Hailey to J.T. Gwynn, 4 January 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25b/232–237.

2 CP Report, January 1933, L/P&J/12/735/4; Bombay Report, 1/10 February 1933, L/P&J/12/733/6.

3 UP Report, February 1933, L/P&J/12/740/14.

4 Bengal Report, March 1933, L/P&J/12/731/19.

5 Government of India memorandum on civil disobedience, 25 February 1933, copy at Mss. Eur. f.150/5a/62; UP Report, March 1933, L/P&J/740/19–20. See Bombay PAI, 8 April

very nicely with an existing narrative of Indian political inconstancy, and it promised future divisions, in keeping with the conception of Indians as venal and provincial political actors.

This analysis in mind, most colonial officials interpreted Indian denunciations of the White Paper, when it was published in March 1933, as gestures without substance. They saw Indian criticism as typical political posturing in advance of local elections or as tactical maneuvering to gain further concessions.[6] Outside of urban areas, moreover, according to the UP government, "District officers report that, on the whole, very little real interest has been evoked by the White Paper." What these officers meant by "real," however, went unreported.[7] Hoare himself had heard similar news, even from the usually troublesome Bengal. He wrote the Governor, John Anderson:

> I am glad to hear what you say as to the possibility of the Congress leaders in Bengal working the Reforms honestly and not for wrecking purposes. Such news as has come through lately in regard to the Calcutta Corporation elections seems to show that the Congress people in Bengal are as divided as ever among themselves.[8]

The Viceroy, Willingdon, summarized this sense of Indian willingness to live with limited reforms in a letter to a retired provincial governor, Harcourt Butler, in the late spring:

> It seems evident that there is a good deal of doubt [in Britain] as to whether the scheme will work, but I feel strongly that it will. You know the Indian as well as anyone and I'm sure will agree that what he wants more than anything is to be able to say before the world that he is administering his own country.[9]

The conviction that Indians were coming around to accepting and working these reforms also featured in discussions at Westminster, as one of Baldwin's advisors wrote him, with a telling opening line, that "unless everything which I have learned about India is false, there is a great unorganized mass of opinion

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1933, at MSAO XII/II/273.

6 Hailey to Sir Michael Keane (Assam Governor), 25 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25c/414–416; Bengal Report, April 1933, L/P&J/731/24; CP Report, March 1933, L/P&J/12/735/13; Hailey to Reading, 26 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25c/424–432.

7 UP Report, April 1933, L/P&J/12/740/26. Such an assessment of rural political quiescence also appeared in Bombay: see Bombay Report, 16/19/ May 1933, L/P&J/12/733/33.

8 Hoare to Anderson, 7 April 1933, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/212–215. Strangely, Anderson's letter to which Hoare is responding here makes no explicit reference to the possibility of Congress working the reforms.

9 Willingdon to Harcourt Butler, 26 May 1933, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/46–47.

that, although affected by the changes which have been taking place during recent years, is opposed to any revolutionary changes."[10]

For the rest of 1933, and through 1934, variations of this argument for the declining intensity of the nationalist movement and the apparent acquiescence of many Indians in a limited reform program persisted. Reports from India stressed why these beliefs were well-founded, outlining the ways in which weaknesses in Indian society played into British hands. The results of local elections in the provinces appeared to support the notion that Indians paid more attention to parochial concerns than national issues, as Congress candidates struggled against regional opposition and local issues predominated.[11] Rural villages continued to be "not at all enthusiastic" about Congress-organized boycotts.[12] The Commissioner of the Burdwan Division in Bengal confidently stated that any remaining political activity was merely "the nervous twitching of the limb after the parent body has actually died."[13] The District Magistrate, an Englishman, in the Midnapur district of the Burdwan Division was shot and killed a month later. The Commissioner was not the only sanguine Briton in Bengal though; Anderson had told Irwin at the same time that terrorism in the province was definitely "on the wane." Anderson soon survived an assassination attempt himself.[14] Such conviction in the power of local attachments underpinned an authoritative prediction made by the Chief Secretary in Madras in 1934:

> Provincial preoccupations will weaken the grip of any all-India movement … Provincial jealousies will play an important part in future and will probably adversely affect Congress as an All-India party. In other words, trouble in future is likely to be Provincial and so localized and a mass all-India movement will be increasingly difficult for even Mr. Gandhi to organize.[15]

Indeed, self-interest explained a variety of Indian actions. Any remaining Congress support in agricultural areas derived from the party's "rank and file" who agitated for their own "livelihood."[16] The Punjab Government reported that its program of aid to rural areas was helping to block Congress inroads there.[17] Self-interest

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10 Davidson to Baldwin, 21 March 1933, Mss. Eng. hist. c.559/55–56.

11 CP Report, June 1933, L/P&J/12/735/21–22; Bengal Report, April 1933, L/P&J/12/731/28; Madras Report, 18 February 1934, L/P&J/12/748/6.

12 UP Report, November/December 1933, L/P&J/12/740/62–68.

13 Bengal Report, August 1933, L/P&J/12/731/57. Burdwan division contained Midnapur, however, a continued political hotspot: see below.

14 Anderson to Hoare, 29 July 1933, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/224–226.

15 G.T.H. Bracken quoted in Arnold, *The Congress in Tamilnad*, p. 188.

16 UP Report, June 1933, L/P&J/12/740/37.

17 Punjab Government to Home Department, Government of India, 30 October 1933, L/P&J/12/397/157–160.

also was likely to split the Congress, a group colonial intelligence officers viewed as controlled by indigenous capitalists, none of whom were pleased by Nehru's drift into "communistic" rhetoric and ideas.[18] As Willingdon put it, "India, being naturally a very Conservative country [sic], will have nothing to do with these extreme views that are put forward by Jawaharlal Nehru and others." In the same vein, Hailey told the Indian Secretary that "the mass of the people" in India were much more moderate in their goals than the rhetoric of a few activists might indicate.[19] Finally, a concern for pure political preservation was also apparent, for, as the Bombay Home Department reckoned, "Many Congressmen had come to recognize that the longer they persisted in a losing fight, the more they would prejudice their political future when the Reforms came into being."[20] The Punjab government figured that some in Congress saw an end to Civil Disobedience as the only way to save themselves from "extinction."[21]

In this atmosphere, Hailey believed he had an opportunity to consolidate a "conservative," landlord-based party in the U.P. He was not entirely "confident of the result, but at all events it is an effort that is worth making."[22] He was still trying to form such a group well into 1934. By the start of that year, Madras officials believed that they too were seeing a "revolt of Congressmen against Congress methods" with the formation of the Andhra Swarajya Party, though they admitted that it had "not yet begun to make much headway."[23] The announcement in Bombay at the same time of a Congress Socialist Group was also suggestive to colonial administrators.[24] When the Congress leadership, then, declared in April 1934 that the party would contest elections to the Indian Legislative Assembly later that year, officials like Hailey did not treat the news with much trepidation, believing instead that the prospect of office would cause a further fissuring within the Indian body politic.[25] Among the issues thought capable of dividing Congress as it went to the hustings were how much the party would "move in the direction of socialism" and the acceptance of the Communal

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18 "Note on Subversive Movements and Organizations (Other than Terrorist)," Home Department Intelligence Bureau (September 1933), L/P&J/12/397/146–147; UP Report, October 1933, L/P&J/12/740/59; CP Report, October 1933, L/P&J/12/735/28; Hailey to J.M. Clay, 3 November 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/26c/329–330; Hailey to Irwin, 19 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27a/64–67.

19 Willingdon to Simon, 15 October 1933, Mss. Simon 77/64–71; Hailey to Hoare, 27 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27a/118–125.

20 Home Department (Bombay) Report, 11 August 1933, Mss. Eur. f.150/5b/276–281.

21 Punjab Report, April 1934, L/P&J/12/750/27.

22 Hailey to Mieville, 4 February 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25b/296–297.

23 Madras Report, 19 March 1934, L/P&J/12/748/10.

24 Bombay Report, 1/6 March 1934, L/P&J/12/744/18–19.

25 Hailey to Willingdon, 10 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27b/221–226; see also Hailey memorandum on political situation, 3 May 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27c/299–305.

Award.[26] Regarding the latter, Hailey predicted a split between moderate Hindus and the Muslims in the Congress and Malaviya's Hindu Mahasabha. Speaking of the future of Indian politics in general, Hailey noted that "England must not misunderstand the position. For a large number of members [of the Assembly] it will be the Communal Award which will be the touchstone, not questions of federation, or franchise and the like." Religious representation, not constitutional niceties, mattered most, for "the cow is the most important figure in all Indian politics."[27] Lord Brabourne, newly installed as Governor in Bombay, was also quick to make such a prediction: "The split in Congress ranks [he wrote one of Hoare's allies in London] now looks rather more permanent than it did to start with, as it really appears as if Malaviya is likely to put up a number of candidates against the official Congress people." At a time of such dissension, the Governor joked (poorly) that Gandhi must have wished himself back in the "peace and quiet" of the Yeravda jail.[28]

The Politics of Untouchability

Of all events in India in 1933 and 1934, however, it was Gandhi's public "harijan" campaign against untouchability, and Indian responses to it, that appeared to encourage British officials most and reassure them that they had not misled themselves in thinking that there were great divides in Indian society, ones so significant as to derail any unified nationalist movement. The untouchability controversy ultimately vindicated, in the colonial mind, the idea of a divisible India, vulnerable to a federal scheme that might offer some groups a stage to assert themselves against others. Once enmeshed in such a framework, these interest groups, with their particular concerns, would lose a national focus, much as politicians were expected to revert to provincial interests once established in local government. As they had during the Poona Pact debate in 1932, colonial analyses of Gandhi's actions over the next two years emphasized how his focus on untouchables was causing problems within the Congress leadership and was also alienating "orthodox" or high-caste Hindus from his leadership. At times provincial governments were almost too eager to see the significance of such divisions, as for example when Bombay reported on a meeting of "50 to 60 Brahmins" that criticized Gandhi's efforts, but concluded from this that "it is evident that Mr.

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26 On the former, see Madras Report, 3 May 1934, L/P&J/12/748/16.

27 Hailey to J. Crerar, 14 June 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27c/350–354; Hailey to F.H. Brown, 19 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27c/463–467.

28 Brabourne to J.P. Thompson (Union of Britain and India), 27 August 1934, India Office Thompson Papers, Mss. Eur. f.137/49/127–128.

Gandhi has lost ground among the orthodox section of the public."[29] Indian officials also paid special attention to the very lukewarm reaction Ambedkar and other untouchable organizers gave to Gandhi's work, as well to untouchables' suspicions about the "genuineness of the Congress championship of their cause."[30] Alongside these divisions, local administrators also noted the growth of Muslim concerns about the harijan campaign as a vehicle for consolidating a communal Hindu voting bloc.[31] The untouchable controversy, or at least reports of it, thus reinforced impressions of the strength of both communal and caste divisions in India.

Gandhi launched an India-wide tour for caste reform in November 1933. There was intense interest in both New Delhi and London as to his progress, his reception, and the meaning of both for Indian political life. Even before Gandhi could set out, intelligence reports indicated that Gandhi was not going to conduct his work in the name of the Congress, Nehru having taken the organization in a different, more avowedly socialist, direction.[32] The split among Hindus was further underlined by reports like that from Nagpur, in central India, where local officials described large meetings of untouchable reformers and of the RSS, the orthodox Hindu association.[33] In describing Gandhi's tour, moreover, administrators on multiple levels adhered almost universally to a single narrative or explanatory framework.[34]

These reports of the Mahatma's appearances all emphasized high-caste or orthodox resistance to Gandhi's proposals to open certain temples or provide access to wells to Hindus from all castes. The Deputy Commissioner in Nagpur explained that there was "a really strong opposition to the whole campaign throughout the district" during Gandhi's visit in early November 1933, a sentiment echoed by officials from districts across Northern Madras.[35] Another District Magistrate in Madras province believed that Gandhi's visit had actually caused a backlash, leaving "orthodoxy … more popular and acceptable except to those with a political axe to grind."[36] The Bengal administration felt that Gandhi had succeeded "in alienating a large volume of the support which he received in earlier years." This opposition

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[29] Bombay Report, 16/23 January 1933, L/P&J/12/733/2.

[30] CP Report, May 1933, L/P&J/12/735/18.

[31] Gould, *Hindu Nationalism*, p. 115; UP Report, May 1933, L/P&J/12/740/32.

[32] UP Report, October 1933, L/P&J/12/740/55.

[33] CP Report, October 1933, L/P&J/12/735/28.

[34] For a compendium of these accounts of Gandhi's tour, see the India Office's file on Gandhi and untouchability at L/P&J/7/595, complete with annotations by India Office staff at the time.

[35] Quoted in Baren Ray, ed., *Gandhi's Campaign against Untouchability, 1933–34: An Account from the Raj's Secret Official Reports* (New Delhi, 1996), pp. 62, 83–85.

[36] Madras Report, 19 March 1934, L/P&J/12/748/10.

to Gandhi had its roots, at least for Bengal, not only in the desire to keep temples and other sites restricted, but also in high-caste enmity over the Poona Pact which reduced elite power within the Hindu body politic and presaged a "leveling down with the genuine untouchables."[37] In assessing the impact of Gandhi's tour on caste relations, however, colonial officials also relied at times on what seemed to be their own instincts or very general impressions. For example, the Chief Commissioner in Delhi argued that the lack of major high-caste demonstrations during Gandhi's visit hardly indicated Hindu unity; rather, he noted, "although perhaps over 60 per cent of Hindus quietly determine not to treat untouchables as equals, they avoid public expression of their views."[38] Similar assessments came from Bombay and Gujarat, where enthusiasm for Gandhi was "outward show," while the "inward feelings" of many who saw him were not uniform at all.[39] N.J. Roughton, Chief Secretary in the Central Provinces, collated district reports on Gandhi's impact, and while acknowledging that it was "perhaps too early" to grasp the full import of the tour, he nevertheless claimed that "orthodox opposition has much more force behind it than appears on the surface, and its strength appears to be increasing."[40] Madras officials concluded that orthodox Hindus there were unwilling to confront the popular Gandhi in public, but would move to undermine his program once his tour in the province concluded.[41] Opposition from untouchable groups also featured prominently in these administrative analyses. B.R. Ambedkar had told his followers in Bombay to welcome Gandhi like "any ordinary visitor," hardly a ringing endorsement of the latter's project.[42] At a rally featuring Ambedkar and other caste reformers, one speaker castigated the Congress for embracing the harijan campaign as simply a "platform stunt."[43] It was reported elsewhere that untouchables were very "skeptical" about seeing any real benefit from Gandhi's crusade.[44] An Indian, described as one who was "as much in touch as anybody with public opinion," similarly argued that untouchables did not see much worth in Gandhi's efforts. And, apart from garlanding Gandhi upon his arrival in Karwar district in Bombay, local untouchables "hardly took any part" in the activities, according to the District Magistrate.[45]

Although, according to these reports, Gandhi's tour had not impressed some sections of Indian society, his appearances had drawn some noticeable crowds,

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37 Bengal Report, October–December 1933, L/P&J/12/731/70–80.

38 Quoted in Ray, *Gandhi's Campaign*, p. 76.

39 Bombay Secret Abstract, March 1934, MSAO, II/VII/5.

40 Quoted in Ray, *Gandhi's Campaign*, p. 72. For further assertion of this view, see CP Report, December 1933, L/P&J/12/735/34.

41 Madras Report, 18 January 1934, L/P&J/748/2.

42 Bombay Report, 1/6 March 1934, L/P&J/12/744/14.

43 Bombay Report, 1/10 October 1933, L/P&J12/733/71.

44 CP Report, November 1933, L/P&J/12/735/30.

45 Quoted in Ray, *Gandhi's Campaign*, pp. 92, 122.

especially in the cities and larger provincial towns. His progress through Bombay, for example, attracted thousands.[46] This certainly indicated his own personal popularity, and in his speeches Gandhi had quite intentionally steered away from politics, but some question remained in colonial circles as to what these large audiences indicated about the level of popular support for the Congress, given Gandhi's association with it and his fame as the organization's iconic leader. Willingdon believed Gandhi drew crowds only "because these stupid people still look upon him as a holy man."[47] Sumit Sarkar, however, has argued that Gandhi's work at least "must have indirectly spread the message of nationalism down to the lowest and most oppressed sections of rural society."[48] Official India, for the most part, did not see things this way. Rather, administrators, like the District Commissioner in Angul in Orissa, reasoned that most in these crowds had come simply "to satisfy their curiosity" about such a famous figure.[49] Other reports credited the size of the crowds to "sight-seers," those who had a "feeling of veneration" for Gandhi, while the police in Madras concluded that:

> the large crowds [50,000 at one meeting] which everywhere turned out to welcome him appear to have been attracted partly by affection and reverence for his personality, partly by curiosity and partly by the innate propensity of the population to participate in any "tamasha" irrespective of its object.[50]

Furthermore, there were reports of political disaffection for Gandhi for reasons other than the untouchability campaign. In detailed reporting on his tour in Western India, the Bombay Police's Special Branch suggested not only that Muslims had largely shunned Gandhi's appearances, but that the Mahatma had met with criticism from mill-workers in Ahmedabad and peasants in Bardoli, Surat and elsewhere, all of whom accused Congress of ignoring them and their real economic distress.[51]

Gandhi's rhetoric at least appeared non-political on the surface, further bolstering the conclusion that his tour had not had much real political impact, and certainly had not brought more Indians into sympathy with the Congress. The Hindu newspapers in the Punjab "were careful to emphasize that the magnificence of [Gandhi's] reception connoted no subscription to his political views or even

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46 For collected intelligence reports on Gandhi's tour, see "Bombay Secret Abstract (1934)" at MSAO III/VII/1–96.

47 Willingdon to H. Butler, 21 February 1934, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/71–72.

48 Sarkar, *Modern India*, p. 329.

49 Report of 9 May 1934 in L/P&J/7/595.

50 CP Report, November 1933, L/P&J/12/735/30–32; Madras Report, 2 February 1933, L/P&J/12/748/4; Ray, *Gandhi's Campaign*, 81.

51 1934 Bombay Secret Abstract, MSAO III/VII/20–24 (June 1934).

approval of his activities on behalf of the untouchables."[52] At the India Office in London, J.W.P. Chidell, tasked with summarizing these voluminous accounts of Gandhi's progress, minuted his impression that "Congress, as a party, has gained little, if anything, by his tour."[53] Hailey, observing the events of late 1933 and early 1934, and not just Gandhi's activities, concluded that Congress was "certainly hopelessly divided and all the political elements resent greatly Gandhi's absorption in the untouchability campaign." He believed "that were we able to introduce the new constitution now, a very large number of Congressmen would seek election."[54]

While many in colonial administration may have convinced themselves that Congress was cracking up under multiple pressures, there were some, largely in the Indian provinces, who took a more cautious view, especially regarding the impact of Gandhi on local populations. The Punjab government agreed that Gandhi's influence had "declined because he [was] unable to reconcile conflicting interests which tend to assume greater importance as the new Constitution gets nearer." However, this analysis continued, "it would be a mistake to regard him as a spent force. Given the occasion he would still be able to wield very great power; and he is more able than any other Indian to organize a big movement against Government if they give him the opportunity and the scope by serious mistakes on their part."[55] Local officials in Midnapur in Bengal were even more direct about Gandhi's continued political influence, and directly asked the Government of India to keep Gandhi away from the district, one that had already seen some significant political activity in the early 1930s. Noting that Gandhi "to the mass of the people stands for Congress, Civil Disobedience, defiance of the law and resistance to authority," the District Magistrate argued that Gandhi's appearance would potentially "set the machinery of disorder and defiance of authority in motion again." Even if Gandhi confined his own actions to the harijan campaign, he would "bring in his train many persons who will use the fact of his mission to untouchables as a cloak to hide their active dissemination of subversive anti-Government doctrines."[56]

In fact, the autumn of 1934 saw Gandhi's retirement from the Congress, as he had concluded that "Congressmen could not purge themselves of artificiality, corruption and an overpowering desire to wrangle among themselves."[57] Gandhi urged Congress to reform itself by recommitting to the ideals of swadeshi, to reconstituting village

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52 Ray, *Gandhi's Campaign*, p. 219.

53 See Chidell's annotations throughout L/P&J/7/595.

54 Hailey to Irwin, 19 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27a/64–67.

55 Ray, *Gandhi's Campaign*, p. 220.

56 *Ibid.*, pp. 245–249.

57 Report of Gandhi's speech of 23 October 1934, Bombay Secret Abstract, MSAO, III/VII/35–36.

India and to remaking the Congress constitution to mandate, among other things, the wearing of khadi cloth and active participation in manual labor by party officials.[58] Colonial officials offered several interpretations of what these events meant for Congress: it either hampered the Congress leadership, leaving them without a central, compelling figure, or it was a "blessing in disguise," given Gandhi's wariness of pursuing an electoral strategy.[59]

The Congress and the Meaning of Elections

Gandhi's retirement from Congress, and colonial attempts to figure out what it portended, occurred at a time when the Government of India was already fairly preoccupied with two other significant events: elections for the Central Legislative Assembly, which were already scheduled for the autumn of 1934, and the impending publication of the Parliamentary Joint Select Committee's report on the India White Paper.[60] Although the Congress had decided to return to normal and legitimate politics, that did not mean that the party's goals for an independent India had changed. And since federation had not yet passed the British Parliament, Hoare realized that there was nothing concrete at the moment which would draw Indians away from the Congress. Hoare was gravely concerned that a Congress success in the elections would only bolster the Die Hard case that Indian autonomy was a disaster in the making, and he pushed Willingdon to postpone the elections by refusing to dissolve the Assembly.[61] The Viceroy, for his part, argued that such a delay would only heighten Congress agitation and nationalist rhetoric, a development which would probably aid even more the Die Hards' case against self-government at the Indian center. Butler agreed with Willingdon.[62] Willingdon also emphasized that a postponement might alienate moderate political opinion in India, thus negating the whole purpose of Indian reform itself.[63] Much debate then ensued between the India Office and New

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[58] Bombay Secret Abstract, MSAO III/VII/40–46 (October 1934).

[59] Bombay Report, 1/6 November 1934, L/P&J/12/744/83–85; Madras Report, 3 November 1934, L/P&J/12/748/34.

[60] Hoare to Stewart, 5 April 1934, L/PO/6/91/106; Stewart to Hoare, 7 April 1934, L/PO/91/101–104; Note by Hoare on Cabinet meeting, 18 April 1934, L/PO/6/91/89.

[61] Hoare to Willingdon, 10 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/291; Hoare to Willingdon, 18 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/295; Hailey to Willingdon, 21 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27b/270–271; Hoare to Willingdon, 25 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/302.

[62] Willingdon to Hoare, 12 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/292; Willingdon to Hoare, 19 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/295–296; Butler memorandum, 24 April 1934, RAB F4/28–29.

[63] Willingdon to Hoare, 26 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/303.

Delhi over when exactly the elections should take place. Hoare, conceding that a postponement would do little help to the cause, still wanted to time the elections carefully and hoped that they would occur at least a month after 20 November, the putative date for the JSC to report. In this way, Hoare felt he could get the JSC recommendations well on their way through the Commons before the Congress campaign began in earnest in India.[64] These discussions paused in the late spring of 1934 as Willingdon began his home leave and Stanley settled in as Acting Viceroy. Stanley reported in due course that a post-Christmas election was not possible, as the Indian budget was scheduled for debate in the first week of December.[65] The next idea was to hold the Assembly elections well before the JSC's recommendations became public, although Hoare already knew that the earliest possible date was 1 November, since the rainy season would prevent campaigning any earlier than late October.[66] Hoare also felt that holding elections just before the JSC report emerged would lead to Indian accusations of dirty tricks and concealment during the Assembly campaigning, charges which would redound to the Die Hards' benefit. However, Stanley responded that the backlash against releasing the JSC's report just after the elections would be nothing compared to what Congress would say if they had a chance to criticize the JSC's work during the campaign itself, and that such a sequence might also weaken the position and faith of Indian moderates, especially if they were not pleased with the report either.[67]

Hoare's concern over what these elections might produce stemmed more from his fear of the reactions a Congress triumph might provoke in Westminster and the Tory constituencies than from what such a result might say about the true strength and organization of the nationalist party. His advisers at the India Office and in New Delhi tried to reassure him in a couple of different ways, arguing first that a good showing by Congress was in no way assured. In Madras in July, public interest in the elections was "as yet lukewarm," while a month later a candidate from the Justice Party for the Madras Corporation was "returned by a large majority in a straight fight against a Congress candidate."[68] The provincial government had great hopes for the Justice Party in fact, given its success throughout the 1920s and its perceived ability "to make capital" out of Congress "dissensions."[69] In all, most of the large provinces reported that Congress faced a variety of problems, from low recruitment in the countryside to internal party

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[64] Hoare to Willingdon, 30 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/12b/305.

[65] Stanley to Hoare, 7 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/339.

[66] Willingdon to Hoare, 23 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/300.

[67] Hoare to Stanley, 16 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/343; Stanley to Hoare, 27 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/346.

[68] Madras Reports, 4 July and 20 August 1934, L/P&J/12/748/24–28.

[69] Madras Report, 20 September 1934, L/P&J/12/748/30.

conflicts and a lack of funds.[70] Willingdon, drawing on an intercepted letter from Nehru, told Hoare that the prospects of Congress splitting over socialists were fairly good.[71]

As the elections drew nearer, however, colonial assessments began to change, evidence of a growing sense that Congress might actually do better than earlier predicted. Those in Madras who had earlier boasted of the prominence of the Justice Party, submitted a much more subdued political estimate in early September:

> The prospects as regards the elections are still obscure. Congress candidates are in the field in most of the constituencies but are receiving outwardly little support … Attendance at public meetings has been small. There has been a tendency … to indulge in intemperate speeches, probably as the only means of exciting enthusiasm in their audiences.[72]

Over the following six weeks, Madras authorities became even more pessimistic, citing a Congress "organization which is superior to that of their opponents" and predicting the party taking half the province's seats.[73] A frustrated Willingdon, still estimating a poor Congress performance, nevertheless complained to Hoare that while the Congress was demonstrating some fight, non-Congress politicians were both unorganized and cowardly: "a flabby crowd without any courage."[74] In U.P., the landlords in whom Hailey had placed his hope also proved a disappointment as "owing to personal prejudices, and a somewhat confirmed attitude of apathy in regard to Assembly representation, [they] have practically allowed these elections to go by default."[75] The existence of Congress's organizational efforts had attracted some notice from officials in Ahmedabad in June, but the warning that "Congress is preparing seriously for the forthcoming elections," in part by following up on Gandhi's provincial tours, did not make it into the digests of provincial information that moved from Bombay city to New Delhi.[76] Now a

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70 Delhi Report, 17 July 1934, L/P&J/12/747/19; CP Report, August 1934, L/P&J/12/746/26; *Statesman* (Calcutta), 5 August 1934; Bombay Report, 1/7 September 1934, L/P&J/12/744/66; UP Report, September 1934, L/P&J/12/751/46; Punjab Report, 8 June 1934, L/P&J/12/750/45–46.

71 Willingdon to Hoare, 24 September 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/7/561–564.

72 Madras Report, 6 September 1934, L/P&J/12/748/29.

73 Madras Report, 18 October and 3 November 1934, L/P&J/12/748/31–34.

74 Willingdon to Hoare, 9 September 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/7/553–555. For Willingdon's confidence that Congress would not emerge well from the polls, see Willingdon to Hoare, 15 October 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/7/573–575.

75 UP Report, November 1934, L/P&J/12/751/55.

76 Bombay Secret Abstract, MSAO III/VII/10 (June 1934).

new official narrative that emphasized Indian parochialism and downplayed the importance of these Assembly elections began to emerge from official circles. Hailey reminded the Viceroy that "[f]ew people in the provinces are interested in the Assembly elections," as compared to those who kept in touch with local politics.[77] He reassured Hoare in the same manner.[78] Hailey also kept alive his hope in the landed elites, musing that such a party might do better once the new provincial legislatures were firmly in place.[79]

After Congress took the great majority of "open" (non-reserved) seats in the elections of mid-November, this new explanatory framework became even more significant. Willingdon, who had previously served as Madras Governor, erupted over the Congress success there: "What has happened to the Justice Party in Madras? They seem to have been completely snowed under, and Madras has gone completely Congress everywhere. It's a bad job, for we had at least relied on the soundness of Madras and now I fear we shall have a rough time in the Assembly."[80] This inability to comprehend a pan-Indian move towards Congress helps to explain why officials resorted to understating the real importance of these electoral gains, but it may not account fully for the powerful emergence of this explanation. Hoare himself may have been responsible, not for the rise of such a rationalization, but for the vehemence with which the Viceroy and his advisers asserted it. Faced with the prospect of a battering from Churchill and the Die Hards over the fatuousness of introducing political reforms after such a victory for those Indians who opposed them as too moderate, Hoare asked Willingdon repeatedly for an "appreciation of the position together with suggestions as to the best line to take [in Parliament]."[81] Spurred now by the need to protect the federal scheme and, for some, Hoare himself, on the eve of the JSC's report, high-level Indian officials responded to the Indian Secretary's request. Willingdon repeated Hailey's point that most Indians cared only for local politics and issues, thus: "The ordinary elector, knowing little of All-India questions, is influenced by sentimental considerations, sympathies [sic] with a candidate who is 'Agin the Government' and who has perhaps suffered for his opinions."[82] Similar arguments about Indian political myopia reached the India Office from Assam, U.P. and Madras, all noting that Congress did not fare nearly

77 Hailey to Willingdon, 18 September 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/55–62.

78 Hailey to Hoare, 1 Oct. 1934, Mss. Eur. E.220/28A/74–79.

79 Hailey to Willingdon, 9 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/102–106.

80 Willingdon to Erskine, 19 November 1934, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/3.

81 Hoare to Willingdon, 19 November 1934, L/PO/6/91/10; Hoare to Willingdon, 7 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/397; Hoare to Willingdon, 13 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1197–1200; Hoare to Brabourne, 19 December 1934, TP VII/4/23; Hoare to Willingdon, 21 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/403.

82 Willingdon to Hoare, 23 November 1934, L/P&J/7/752/90–95.

as well in local elections held alongside those to the Assembly. In London, Butler noted on the margins of one such report: "The point about the Local Elections is most useful."[83] The Congress triumph was "one of organization rather than principle," one that had employed images of Gandhi to motivate "so uninstructed and so emotional" an electorate, and one that was "no guide at all to the future results in the next provincial elections."[84] With the addition of some wholesale criticism of non-Congress Indians, the mystery of the Congress Party's success was solved.

This all-encompassing explanation for the failure of the Congress to wither away was not simply the product of political expediency or the need to rescue Hoare and his reform plan. It instead built upon already-constructed understandings of Indian political behavior and thus managed to remain convincing to those like Hoare and Hailey who had relied upon such visions in creating and championing the White Paper scheme. This rationale also appealed to officials like Willingdon, who were genuinely shocked by their failure to anticipate political developments and were hardly ready to concede a misreading on their own part. There were of course some contradictions present in official thinking, but they went largely unnoticed. If Indians did not act according to one conception, another stood ready to explain the situation. The success of Congress did not put paid to ideas of innate Indian parochialism; it instead merely testified to Indian political immaturity and weakness, and thus was an aberration. This sort of reasoning allowed Hailey to continue to speculate about a landlord party emerging in the U.P., rivaling the Unionist Party of his idealized Punjab, and also made it easier for Willingdon and Lord Erskine, the Governor, to see as only temporary the rebuke Madras had given to the Justice Party.

An "Oriental Mode of Proceeding"

The India Office and the Government of India were not only able to assure themselves in late 1934 that the federal scheme still stood a good chance of acceptance, but were also fairly confident at the same time that the Indian princes would fulfill their earlier promises and accede to the reforms. At the close of

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[83] For the entire file of analysis of the 1934 elections by India Office personnel, see L/P&J/7/752. Butler's note is at page 63 of the file.

[84] Madras Report, 20 November 1934, L/P&J/12/748/35; Bombay Report, 16/19 November 1934, L/P&J/12/744/89; Willingdon to Hoare, 19 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/8/591–593; Erskine to Hoare, 23 November 1934, Mss. Eur. d.596/12/5–6; Willingdon to Hoare, 22 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/8/591–593. For a full summary of these assessments, and their institutionalization in the colonial mind, see the Government of India's report, *India 1933–34* (New Delhi, 1934), pp. 38–39.

the third Round Table Conference, Hoare felt that "there was a very good feeling" between Britain and the states, whose representatives had left London "particularly pleased."[85] The White Paper of March 1933 showed the depth of Hoare's sustained interest in getting the princes into federation: it increased the number of federal seats for the princes from the plan discussed at the Round Tables, and promised as well that British officials in India would continue to safeguard the "rights of any Indian state" against any threat from the British Indian part of the federation.[86] However, Hoare's attempts to cultivate the princes had never gone entirely smoothly, and the reception given the White Paper by the princes indicated that the Indian Secretary should not become too comfortable about their acquiescence. The Chamber of Princes, the organization of the smaller states (that is virtually all except the two major states of Hyderabad and Mysore), had never embraced the federal plan with enthusiasm, gravely concerned as they were that they would lose all privileges and be swallowed up by a Congress-dominated federation. There were also disagreements over the size of the financial settlements which Britain would grant the states as a part of acceding to federation. Madhava Rao, on assignment in India from the anti-reform *Morning Post*, helped fan controversy over these issues when the White Paper was published in March 1933.[87] When the Chamber Princes, meeting at the end of March 1933, voted their continued discontent with the terms of the White Paper, however, London and New Delhi did not panic.[88] The view in London was that the princes were simply bargaining in their usual "Eastern way," and the vote did not represent the views of the two largest and most important princely states.[89] Hoare himself expressed this view that the princes could hardly help themselves from haggling at the constitutional bazaar: he argued that the fundamental problem he faced throughout these negotiations was that "Oriental traditions of bargaining will inevitably involve [the princes] holding their hands until the last possible moment."[90] Moreover, the opposition in the Chamber had followed the lead of the egregious Bhupinder Singh, Maharajah of the small state of Patiala and notorious for luxurious living which had eventually ended in

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85 Hoare to Willingdon, 28 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/566–572.

86 Quoted in Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 123.

87 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 122–127; see also, Nawab of Bhopal to Willingdon, 29 October 1933, L/PO/5/3/391–422.

88 Willingdon to Hoare, 26 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e. 240/12a/63.

89 F.H. Brown to Hailey, 23 February 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25C/346; Hoare to Willingdon, 28 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/66; Hydari's statement to JSC, 27 May 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/53/9; see also Hoare to Willingdon, 23 October 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/186; India Office memorandum, 25 October 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/53/2.

90 Memorandum of India Office meeting, 24 January 1934, copy at Davidson Oxford papers, Mss. Eng. hist. c.566/23–30.

bankruptcy.[91] Hoare and the India Office assumed, correctly, that the Maharajah had fallen victim to the misleading propaganda against federation spread by Madhava Rao. And, in another heartening sign, the triumph of the Patiala faction in March had led several, more influential, princes to resign from the Chamber of Princes altogether.[92] Both Hoare and Willingdon, therefore, remained confident in the spring of 1933 that, after some minor modifications of the terms, the princes would retract their objections to federation.[93]

The India Office, nevertheless, left nothing to chance. They fought off an attempt by Lords Salisbury and Lloyd to bring over Patiala and some other like-minded princes to testify before the JSC. Such an appearance would have cast doubt on Hoare's claim, vital to his cause, that the princes were ready to accept federation, and would also have boosted Patiala's standing in princely circles back in India. Patiala ultimately proved unwilling to appear before the committee, where he might face some hard questions about his politics and his lifestyle as well.[94] Hoare also took some positive, though somewhat controversial, steps to shore up pro-federation sentiment in Hyderabad and Mysore particularly. This included bestowing Privy Councillorships and other honors on the representatives of friendly princely states.[95] The India Office and the Government of India, at Hoare's direction, also undertook to settle some long-running disputes between the Government of India and the two large states. These settlements, which largely concerned disputed territories on their borders or the collection of tax revenue, appeared to satisfy these important states and boded well for their future accession to federation, which Hoare had made his explicit goal in undertaking the settlement negotiations in the first place.[96] These settlements did not, however, escape the attention of the Die Hards, who were kept informed by Rao in India. Churchill, Lloyd and the India Defence League pestered the Government about them in the House and privately lobbied Derby in the hope that the seventeenth Earl would realize that the offering of these "bribes" indicated the princes' real unwillingness to enter the federation, and thus demonstrated the likely ineffectiveness of Hoare's

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91 Hoare to Willingdon, 24 May 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/109.

92 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 126–127.

93 Hoare to Willingdon, 1 May 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/96.

94 Lloyd to Salisbury, 28 April 1933, GLLD 11/1; Lloyd to Salisbury, 7 June 1933, GLLD 11/1; Hoare to Willingdon, 16 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/120–121; Hoare to Salisbury, 4 July 1933, L/PO/5/17/40–41.

95 Hoare to Willingdon, 7 September 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/810–815; Hoare to Willingdon, 3 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/949–952.

96 Hoare to Willingdon, 18 November 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/534–538; Hoare to Willingdon, 28 December 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/2/566–572; Hoare to Willingdon, 10 February 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/599–606; Hoare to Willingdon, 3 August 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/767–787; Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 131–133; Copland, "The Hyderabad (Berar) Agreement of 1933," pp. 281–299.

vaunted safeguards.[97] The attack did not get far, faced with both the Government campaign to discredit the Die Hards and the loyalty of Derby and his friends to Hoare's policy.[98] Hoare himself had noted in late 1933, at the conclusion of an earlier settlement with Hyderabad, that his actions did look somewhat shady, but he added shamelessly that even if Churchill made a charge of bribery, "I [Hoare] do not see how he can possibly substantiate the charge."[99] Derby's response to the Die Hards' accusations followed the line taken by the India Office that the princes' constant agitation for concessions did not indicate unhappiness with the federal plan, but instead reflected the Indian predisposition to haggling and bargaining until the last moment.[100]

With these princely grievances reconciled, Hoare and his advisers felt throughout 1934 that they had scotched any real opposition to future federation and, moreover, that most of the princes' complaints had not originated from true concerns over the future, but from the princes' quaint way of doing business and their recognition that Hoare needed them to fulfill his goal.[101] Hoare and, initially, Willingdon saw "no great difficulty" in the way of Hyderabad's accession to the federation, especially now that the state's territorial grievances were settled.[102] By March 1934 the India Office was already at work drafting the instruments of accession by which the princes would join the all India federal system.[103] However, while Hoare remained optimistic about the princes' accession, the Viceroy had begun to have his doubts, especially since he felt British India would react badly to changes the JSC might make to the White Paper, and that such an uproar would frighten the princes away and convince them against joining such pro-democratic forces in the federation.[104] Hoare and his advisers found their sanguine expectations confirmed to a great

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97 J. Lees Milne to P. Donner, 10 April 1933, CHAR 2/593/6; Gwynne to Churchill, 20 November 1933, CHAR 2/194/116; Churchill to Orr-Ewing, 11 February 1934, CHAR 2/226/11; Churchill to Derby, 20 February 1934, CHAR 2/573A/91; O'Dwyer memorandum: "Financial Inducements to the Princes," undated, CHAR 2/240B/95–104.

98 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 133–134.

99 Hoare to Willingdon, 1 December 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/915–919.

100 Derby to Lloyd, 18 June 1934, 920DER[17] 37/9.

101 India Office memorandum, 25 October 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/53/2; Hoare memorandum, 19 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/53/3.

102 Hoare to Willingdon, 15 December 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/926–929.

103 India Office memoranda, March 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/53/1; Hoare to Willingdon, 9 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/978–982. See also Hoare memorandum, 19 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/53/3.

104 Willingdon to Hoare, 22 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/298–300; Willingdon to Hoare, 3 May 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/309–310; Willingdon to Hoare, 9 December 1934, L/PO/5/3/153–156.

extent in December 1934, when Hydari, the Hyderabad representative, announced his satisfaction with the report of the JSC.[105]

Underlying Hoare's determined optimism was another conviction, one which had prompted his efforts to meet many of the princes' demands in 1933 and 1934: the necessity to get the federal plan into being as soon as possible. Rather than viewing the federation issue as an excuse for further prevarication, the India Office held that it must be implemented at once, lest any delay alienate Britain's moderate allies on the sub-continent. The India Office had thus begun in early 1934 preparing the way for the final negotiations with the princes over accession.[106] In March 1934 Hoare himself told the JSC that dealing with the princes might mean "putting up with some anomalies and delays," but that these must not be allowed to persist, going on to tell the JSC that:

> any attempt at constitutional reform that did not make the framework for a reformed centre is in my view and in present circumstances bound to fail and ... will inevitably result in recreating the really critical state of affairs in which we were involved two and a half years ago.[107]

Butler, too, told Brabourne, the Bombay Governor, that it was necessary "to curtail the interval between provincial autonomy and the establishment of federation as much as we can." He was concerned not only about impatience in India, but also that British politicians not have time to re-think their votes on India and try to halt the process after the advent of provincial autonomy.[108]

Sapru and the Burden of Success

Official opinion in London and New Delhi certainly sought assurance for the success of the federal plan in long-standing beliefs about Indian political behavior, but these administrators also continued to rely on information from supposedly influential Indians, with Sapru and Jayakar again the most prominent. Sapru's strategy had not changed. In fact, he elaborated on his thinking in 1933,

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105 Hoare to Willingdon, 2 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/376–377; Hoare to Willingdon, 5 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1193–1196; Hoare to Willingdon, 7 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/397; some in the India Office believed that Willingdon and the New Delhi administration had not done nearly as much as they might have to secure the princes to the reform plan: see Croft to Brabourne, 8 March 1935, L/PO/5/3/310–319.

106 Hoare to Willingdon, 9 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/978–982.

107 Hoare's notes, March 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/52a/1.

108 Butler to Brabourne, 14 December 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/93–94.

in an effort to get Congress involved in the Indian elections (in a letter worth quoting extensively):

> We have no reason to feel alarmed or disappointed ... that the proposed constitution will give us neither independence, whatever that may mean, nor immediate Dominion Status. We are of course entitled to examine critically the nature of the safeguards and the reservations ... Nevertheless it is my conviction that with all these safeguards that if we can send the right sort of men in [sic] the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils, that is to say, men who will not hesitate to resign their offices if the interests of the country should require such a course ... the safeguards will not and cannot interfere with the responsibility of the Ministers ... I shall beg of you to note that it is one thing for the Governors and the Governor-General to overrule Indian Ministers at the present moment when they are only a fraction of their Governments and when there is always an official block and a nominated block ready at hand to support the official point of view. It will be quite another thing when the whole of the Government in the Provinces will be Indian and 7 out of 9 Ministers of the Central Government will be responsible to the Legislature. No Governor and no Viceroy can, in my opinion, easily interfere with the discharge of their responsibility by the Ministers provided of course they are men of the right sort ... if the right sort of men can be persuaded to go in they will hold such a powerful weapon in their hands that within a few years they can traverse the rest of the ground ... when they are in possession of the machinery they will be able to achieve much greater success in expanding the constitution than we can at present hope to do. It is for this reason that I am clearly of the opinion that the advanced section of politicians such as the Congressmen should clearly face the situation and take charge of the machinery of Government.[109]

Writing to another friend that same day, Sapru reminded him that Gandhi had "himself entered into a pact with Lord Irwin" that did not promise independence explicitly and argued that "some Congress leaders" were "taking a much more literal view" of the proposed safeguards than was necessary.[110] Sapru reiterated to Jayakar what he had told other Indians, including Congress members, that:

> so far as it lies in our power we should try to save the situation because although we may not be getting Dominion Status now, I have no doubt that the new Constitution, with the necessary improvements, will place a powerful weapon in our hands.[111]

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[109] Sapru to Janakdhari Prasad, 22 January 1933, quoted in Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 243.

[110] Sapru to R.D.K. Kaul, 22 January 1933, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 237. For Sapru's willingness to accept temporary safeguards, see Sapru to Haksar, 1 December 1932, SP 1/H.

[111] Sapru to Jayakar, 23 March 1933, SP 2/J.

Sapru was, however, growing more frustrated by Congress and its methods, as well as its insistence on more expansive pledges of reform.[112] Criticized by the Congress press for his embrace of constitutional methods, Sapru angrily declared that "if I had not declared my resolve I would have point blank asked them and others of their way of thinking whether civil disobedience had succeeded any more than our methods." If Indians did not act as "realists" and understand "the limitations of [the Indian] position," then "there [was] no hope for us."[113] He had also grown more impatient with British intransigence, especially the Government of India's desire for "an open disavowal of their creed by Congressmen" before releasing them from detention, since such a stance only hardened opinions on both sides and reduced the chances for workable, gradual reform.[114] It would be better, he wrote Irwin, to have Congress people "inside the constitution than outside."[115] The White Paper was not something over which he "could afford to enthuse," but, initially, he had not yet despaired of seeing the proposals in the White Paper adjusted though.[116]

Over the spring and summer of 1933, however, Sapru grew increasingly disillusioned with Hoare's proposal and the "hollowness of the scheme" whereby the "ultimate power is to remain with Parliament forever."[117] His visit to London in the summer, in order to take part in the Joint Select Committee's hearings only compounded his anger. Despite repeated efforts to convince the India Office that Indians would not rally to "a constitution which might materialize in five, seven or even ten years time, or never," or to any plan that displayed such "a spirit of distrust of Indians," Sapru returned to India convinced that the British were "not prepared to go an inch beyond the White paper."[118] It appeared that Sapru had in fact been undermined by his own earlier success, namely his ability, earlier in the 1930s, to present a more "moderate" India to colonial officials. The movement of the Congress away from Civil Disobedience, and the British interpretation of the nationalists' turn to electoral politics, bolstered Sapru's case. However, the fact that this had occurred despite the exclusion of "Dominion Status" language and the provision of non-temporary safeguards in the White Paper left him without any leverage at all to argue for more expansive reforms.

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112 Sarkar, *Modern India*, pp. 330–331.

113 Sapru to Jayakar, 20 August 1933, SP 2/J; Sapru to Jayakar, 11 January 1934, SP 2/J; Jayakar to Sapru, 15 August 1934, SP 2/J.

114 Sapru to B. Rama Rau, 12 February 1933, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 241–242.

115 Sapru to Irwin, 18 February 1933, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 244–246.

116 Sapru to Willingdon, 23 March 1933, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, p. 252. See also Jayakar to Sapru, 21 March 1933, SP 2/J; Hailey to Reading, 26 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25c/424–432.

117 Sapru to Pole, 1 April 1933, SP 1/P.

118 Sapru to B.N. Gurtu, 12 May 1933; Sapru to B.N. Gurtu, 2 June 1933; Sapru to A.N. Atal, 23 June 1933; Sapru to Gandhi, 3 October 1933 (all at *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 257–264.)

Sapru's own history, his public disagreements with the Congress over methods and aims and his oft-stated preference for constitutional progress, further reduced his options for responding to the 1933 proposals. He could never take up civil disobedience or public protest; he could only continue to assert that Indians would welcome whatever reforms Britain presented and hope that such promises would prevent further retrenchments in colonial policy and thus provide Indians something to work with in the future. This meant that:

> patriotic, independent and practical minded Congressmen should capture all positions of advantage and demonstrate to the world at large that they can run the machinery effectively. I have no doubt of their capacity, their patriotism and of their power of organization … The only way in which we can bring about the necessary changes to [safeguards and Dominion Status], is by making the best use of the powers, limited as no doubt they are in certain respects, for the next few years. We must prepare our own schemes, get comprehensive support for them and support our ministers in fighting for their acceptance.[119]

It also meant that Indian politicians should not publicly state "that they think they are much better off under the existing Montagu-Chelmsford constitution than they will be under the proposed federation" lest such declarations "strengthen the hands" of the Die Hards and prevent any meaningful reform at all.[120] For all of its faults, the White Paper was not "so black as it is painted to be in certain newspapers and by certain politicians or that it will make our position worse than it is now."[121]

Sapru's actions led Hailey, for one, to conclude in early 1934 that opposition from Indians to the White Paper "[did] not mean that Liberal politicians would not take their part in working the new constitution … [and] were we to introduce the new constitution now, a very large number of Congressmen would seek election."[122] After a conversation with Sapru a few days after writing that, Hailey reported to the Viceroy that Sapru believed that if the White Paper plan were passed "without any radical modification of the original proposals, large numbers of professed Congressmen, the great bulk of Liberals, and the great bulk of Muslims will agree to work it."[123] There was a significant drawback to Sapru's approach also, one that seems quite apparent in historical hindsight. The more that he insisted that Indians would at least work the new constitution despite its flaws, the more leeway he gave Hoare and his colleagues to pull even further

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119 Sapru to K.M. Munshi, 29 December 1933, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 265–266.

120 Sapru to B. Rama Rau, 3 February 1934, *Crusader for Self-Rule*, pp. 267–268.

121 Sapru to G.D. Birla, 22 June 1934, SP 1/B.

122 Hailey to Irwin, 19 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27a/64–67.

123 Hailey to Willingdon, 23 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27a/71–74.

back on the reforms scheme. They did just that in late 1934, and Sapru could do nothing to stop them. In fact, his response only confirmed British notions of how little they might actually have to give to India.

Indian Accommodations and the Future of Reform

By the early spring of 1933, the JSC had settled down to its work. Despite Hoare's concern that the non-stop and verbose testimony, especially by Indian politicians, might drive the committee's members to distraction, key members of the body, especially Austen Chamberlain, had begun to warm to their task.[124] Indeed Chamberlain soon had a very good idea of what he needed to accomplish both on the JSC and in the party as a whole; he must find a way to reconcile effective Indian reform, the need for which he accepted, with a deep personal distaste for such a measure and, more important, with the genuine concerns of many in the party about the possible ramifications of the White Paper for Britain's imperial future.[125] The events of the summer helped Chamberlain to forge ahead with this work and gather like-minded Conservatives on the JSC around him. One factor propelling such a development was the behavior of the few Die Hards, especially Salisbury, who duly served as agreed on the JSC, but whose obstreperousness and ill-humor were, in Butler's words, driving more moderate Tories "over our boundary."[126] Derby found Salisbury "interminable" and out "to wreck" the White Paper scheme.[127] Salisbury's intransigence, however, prompted Hoare himself to offer and make an extended appearance before the committee.[128] His performance, which left him feeling that he would "very soon be dead," helped to make clearer to the less rigid Tories both the necessity for the federal plan and its reasonableness. Testimony by several ex-ICS men and British businessmen based in India also underscored the virtues of cautious accommodation with Indian political aspirations.[129] Yet Chamberlain and those who gathered around

124 Hoare to Anderson, 28 April 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/9/43–47; Hoare to Willingdon, 20 April, 19 May and 2 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/680–684, 704–708, 715–720.

125 A. Chamberlain to J. Anderson, 26 July 1933, AC 40/1/9; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 22 July 1933, AC 5/1/626; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 7 October 1933, AC 5/1/634.

126 Hoare to Sykes, 15 May 1933, TP VII/4/9; Butler to parents, 22 June 1933, RAB D48/980–983; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 16 June 1933, AC 5/1/621; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 3 July 1933, AC 5/1/624.

127 Derby to G. Stanley, 10 August 1933, 920DER[17] 37/12.

128 Hoare to Willingdon, 30 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/741–745.

129 Hoare to Willingdon, 7 July 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/746–750; Butler to parents, 6 July 1933, RAB D48/984–987; Butler to parents, 27 July 1933, RAB D49/990–1001. See also Lord Zetland's memorandum of October 1933, copy at 920DER[17] 37/13.

him, including Derby, Lord Zetland, Edward Cadogan and Lord Hardinge, were hardly prepared to accept every clause of the White Paper; personal disinclination or political calculation about sentiment within the Tory party as a whole, or both, prevented that. Their determination to make some changes in Hoare's proposal received a powerful boost from the appearance of various Indian representatives before the Committee during the summer of 1933. Sapru, in an apparent hint of his true intentions for India, told the JSC that a more autonomous, federal India would seek wholesale changes in the membership of the Indian Civil Service, specifically the dismissal of all those Europeans appointed after 1919, a proposal which was sure to draw the ire of the service associations and of their Conservative supporters, "quite capable of bursting into flame, even if basking only in the weak sunlight of Bournemouth."[130] Chamberlain felt that the Indian delegates to the JSC had served "to convince us not only that all the safeguards are necessary but that we must supplement them by further precautions."[131]

Throughout the autumn of 1933 Chamberlain and his colleagues on the Committee discussed possible modifications of the White Paper scheme, changes which would satisfy not only them but the great bulk of the party. This Chamberlainite group within the larger JSC saw room for some "improving criticisms" of the federal plan, especially in regard to voting procedures in India, commercial safeguards, and the role of the princely states.[132] The major concern of the group was the procedure for elections to the central federal assembly, specifically the White Paper provision which envisaged the direct election of representatives to the Lower House of the Central Legislature.[133] These Tories' long-standing doubts of Indian political ability, exacerbated by the sometimes contentious (or, perhaps, not sufficiently deferential) Indian presentations to the JSC, left them unwilling to consider a popularly elected Indian central government. Edward Cadogan proposed a less "dangerous" solution:

> Indirect election to the Centre by the Provincial Governments and Provincial Legislatures does away with the fantastic suggestion of the White Paper that the Central Legislature should be in any way responsible to a popular electorate.[134]

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130 Hoare to Willingdon, 2 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/715–720.

131 A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 7 October 1933, AC 5/1/634; see also Derby to Hardinge, 22 August 1933, 920DER[17] 37/9.

132 A. Chamberlain memorandum (incorporating discussions with Zetland, Cadogan and Eustace Percy), October 1933, AC 40/2/8.

133 E. Percy memorandum, 6 September 1933, AC 40/2/1a; A. Chamberlain memorandum, 16 October 1933, 920DER[17] 37/13.

134 E. Cadogan memorandum, 25 October 1933, AC 40/2/6.

By November 1933 these Conservatives had started to gather for weekly meetings at Derby's London house, and indirect election to the federal centre had become their primary, though not only, goal.[135] They soon apprised Hoare of their feelings.[136] The Indian Secretary and the Viceroy were initially cool towards indirect election, apprehensive of the reception which a retraction of a White Paper promise would bring in India.[137] Nevertheless, Hoare also realized that Chamberlain's opposition to an un-amended White Paper scheme might very well prevent the passage of any Indian legislation, and thus bring about a reaction in India even more disastrous than one over the imposition of indirect election. Hoare put the uncomfortable logic of this situation clearly to the Viceroy, pointing out to Willingdon political realities at home and urging him to make known his "preferences between various proposals [for different methods of indirect election], even though you think them all objectionable."[138] As Hoare had anticipated, the group around Chamberlain maintained its lobbying for indirect election, with Sir Austen himself telling to Hoare that he would "feel bound to press for an alteration in this respect."[139] More urgently, Chamberlain warned Lord Linlithgow, the Chairman of the JSC, that "[o]n the question of indirect election I feel so strongly that I think I must press my conclusions even to a division if necessary."[140] Chamberlain was joined in pressing his case by his allies, who included Derby, fresh from battling hostile textile interests in Lancashire and newly concerned about direct elections in India.[141]

Hoare, faced with the loss of vital support for his Indian plans, but still fairly confident that most reasonable Indians would understand his backtracking on direct federal elections as a means to a larger good, began to move slowly towards a readjustment of the White Paper proposals.[142] Among his advisors, Hailey in particular had counseled Hoare to accept this change: "I do not think it would affect the decision of the mass of the people, such as now appear in

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135 Amery diary II/309, 14 November 1933; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 18 November 1933, AC 5/1/640.

136 A. Chamberlain to Hoare, 21 December 1933, AC 40/3/4.

137 Hoare to Willingdon, 15 December 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/926–929; Hoare to Willingdon, 5 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/953–954; Hoare to A. Chamberlain, 22 January 1934, copy at 920DER[17} 37/13.

138 Hoare to Willingdon, 16 January 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/955–957.

139 A. Chamberlain to Hoare, 1 February 1934, AC 40/3/12; India Office memorandum, 24 January 1934, copy in Davidson Oxford papers: Mss. Eng. hist. c.566/23–30.

140 A. Chamberlain to Linlithgow, 2 March 1934, AC 40/3/20.

141 A. Chamberlain memorandum, 2 March 1934, AC 40/2/15; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 16 March 1934, AC 5/1/656; Zetland to Chamberlain, 27 March 1934, AC 40/1/32; Derby to Chamberlain, 28 March 1934, AC 40/1/31; Derby to G. Stanley, 27 February 1934, 920DER[17] 37/11.

142 Hoare to Willingdon, 2 March 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/996–1000.

our Legislative Councils, to work the scheme." Sapru and Jayakar might not like the change to indirect election, but that was not of great concern.[143] At the India Office, both Hoare and Butler undertook to convince the Viceroy and prominent Indian Governors of the need for such amendments to the federal scheme, not an easy task as many senior British administrators in India believed that a retreat from direct election would profoundly alienate moderate Indian politicians. In this case, however, the opinions of the men on the spot weighed less when put against strong political feeling in Westminster. Butler put it bluntly to Brabourne, the Bombay Governor: "I appreciate the value of standing pat on the White Paper and the importance of Indian opinion; but politically here we must have an extra wing to fly with ... It is a case of throwing over parts of one's equipment to save the ship."[144] Hoare, backed by MacDonald, Baldwin and Irwin (now Lord Halifax upon his father's death), wished the Viceroy to explain to Indian politicians how valiantly the India Office had struggled to preserve direct election, but at the same time told Willingdon that, without these amendments, passage of the Indian reforms would "be an almost hopeless task."[145] In fact, Hoare had searched for some time for a compromise solution to the impasse over election procedure, but his suggestions became contrived and unwieldy, as he posited schemes for direct federal election under a very limited franchise or by a system of progressively limited electorates.[146] By May 1934, however, as the Chamberlain-Derby group remained firm in its demand, Hoare finally abandoned all effort to preserve even a pretense of direct election.[147] The Indian Secretary had by now lost all patience with those in India who continued to support direct election, lamenting Willingdon's lack of political sense and urging George Stanley, Acting Viceroy as Willingdon went on leave, to "get into the heads of your entourage the hard facts that have got to be faced."[148] He further reminded those in New Delhi that his domestic difficulties were "almost insurmountable and they will be made quite insurmountable if we get nothing but negative criticism and no helpful suggestions from India."[149] The amendments

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143 Hailey to Hoare, 27 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/27a/118–125.

144 Butler to Brabourne, 25 January 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20; see also Butler to Brabourne, 15 February 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20.

145 Hoare to Willingdon, 13 April 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1030–1042; Hoare to Willingdon, 3 May 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1053–1057.

146 Hoare to A. Chamberlain, 13 April 1934, AC 40/1/33; Zetland to A. Chamberlain, 14 April 1934, AC 40/1/34; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 28 April 1934, AC 5/1/661.

147 Cadogan to A. Chamberlain, 2 May 1934, AC 40/1/38; Hardinge to A. Chamberlain, 2 May 1934, AC 40/1/40; A. Chamberlain memorandum, 3 May 1934, AC 40/1/41; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 5 May 1934, AC 5/1/662.

148 Hoare to Stanley, 22 May 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1068–1069.

149 Hoare to Stanley, 1 June 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1070–1076; Hoare to Stanley, 19 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1098–1100.

were now set: legislatures in the autonomous Indian provinces, themselves directly elected, would elect representatives to both the Upper and Lower Federal Chambers, where these delegates would sit with the appointed representatives of the Indian princes. As Butler put it succinctly, Hoare had "provide[d] a scalp to that Conservative portion [of MPs] which follows Chamberlain."[150]

The change in electoral procedure was not the JSC's only alteration to the White Paper, though it was the most significant, removing any immediate prospect of any genuinely responsible government for all India. Chamberlain and his friends had managed to gain some other changes as well, again since Hoare was loath to confront these powerful and influential Conservatives. Issued in November 1934, the JSC's Report reserved more powers for provincial Governors with respect to matters of public safety, the prosecution of "terrorists" and the ability to overrule elected Ministers in time of danger. The White Paper's broad scheme for the transfer of responsibility for everyday "law and order" to these elected provincial governments nonetheless remained intact. Derby was able also to gain some stronger language on commercial discrimination and the imposition of "penal" tariffs in the Report. The Report also suggested stronger measures to protect the pensions of British civil servants and military officers in India.[151] As Lord Sankey recalled at the end of 1934, the White Paper had largely "stood the test," but "we gave way [on certain issues] at the Joint Select Committee to secure the support of Austen Chamberlain."[152]

As Hoare prepared in late 1934 to publish the JSC's findings, he received consistent advice from his officials. Hailey predicted that "ordinary provincial feeling" would not be agitated over the change to indirect election, given Indians' predominant interest in local affairs and local patronage opportunities. Willingdon, drawing on another impression of India, advised Hoare to ignore any Indian antipathy as "psychological with regard to the Indian more than anything else. He is by nature a critic and hitherto always has been."[153] Indian reactions to the committee's report upon its publication in late November, especially Sapru's response, seemed to follow along the lines Hailey had discussed. Sapru, again somewhat trapped by his own strategy, admitted to Jayakar that he would not oppose the JSC's alterations: he would focus on "constructive suggestions," not

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[150] Butler to Brabourne, 3 May 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/187–188.

[151] For summaries of the JSC Report, see JSC memorandum, 26 September 1934, 920DER[17] 37/4; Butler memorandum, 4 June 1934, RAB G5/99–104; Butler to Hoare, 2 November 1934, RAB G5/123–124; Union of Britain and India pamphlet, December 1934, copy at RAB F74/41; Conservative Party pamphlet, November 1934, CPA (microfilm) 1934/49.

[152] Sankey diary, 5 January 1935, Mss. Eng. hist. e.288.

[153] Hailey to Hoare, 1 October 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/74–79; Willingdon to Hoare, 15 October 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/7/573–575.

the "wrecking of it."[154] In conversations with Hailey thereafter, Sapru stressed that he would not urge any boycott of the new provincial assemblies, but would work for their being constructed quickly. He also guessed that Congress was likely to work the reforms as well, as its public rhetoric condemning them stemmed largely from the fact that the party could not yet "go back publicly upon much of what they have been saying."[155] From Bengal, Anderson noted a determined Hindu effort to participate in the new scheme, as "non-cooperation will only serve to consolidate the position of the Muslims [and] Depressed Classes."[156] In the Central Provinces, the impression was that "outside Congress circles, there is a fairly large element which is not entirely displeased with the report and is disposed to accept what is given now and hope for more in the future."[157] Claiming, as other officials had, an ability to understand Indians in-depth, Erskine opined that:

> Most of the Indian politicians of all shades are really, in their heart of hearts, surprised that they have been given so much and the more thoughtful of them are a little nervous as to whether they will be able to staff the Provincial Governments with sufficiently able men to make a success of the administrations.[158]

In the same vein, Brabourne argued from Bombay that "in private, quite a number of important people here admit that they realize that this is all they are likely to get, and that to talk of rejection is merely stupid."[159]

For those in London and in India who supported the extension of at least some political concessions to Indians, in the service of maintaining ultimate British control there, the events of 1933 and 1934, especially the successes enjoyed by the pro-reform contingent, vindicated both their efforts and the vision of India that had guided them. To these Britons, it appeared that repression had weakened the resolve of the Congress and awakened in Indians a renewed desire for political participation and the gains it might provide. Both Gandhi's harijan campaign and continued resentment of the Communal Award and Poona Pact had brought to light the persistence of social and religious division in Indian society, while Nehru's economic thought seemed likely to split the Congress

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154 Sapru to Jayakar, 8 November 1934, SP 2/J.

155 Hailey to Hoare, 11 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/117–122; Sapru to Hailey, 22 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/125–128; Hailey to Sapru, 26 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/129–131; Sapru to Jayakar, 30 November 1934, SP 2/J; Sapru to Hailey, 30 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.220/28a/132–135.

156 Anderson to Hoare, 10 December 1934, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/348–349.

157 CP Report, December 1934, L/P&J/12/746/41.

158 Erskine to Hoare, 22 December 1934, Mss. Eur. d.596/12/11–12.

159 Brabourne to Thompson, 24 November 1934, Mss. Eur. f.137/43.

itself. Sapru's continued acquiescence had helped to demonstrate just how willing Indians were to embrace any political change, however cautious it was. Once Indians began, as many analyses promised, to take part in the new constitutional structures, these divisions, an inherent provincialism and a profound self-interest would all combine to blunt the effectiveness of Congress as a truly national organization. The rather inconvenient existence of continued princely ambivalence over federation and the equally problematic success of Congress in the Assembly elections did not provoke colonial reassessment; they instead became easily (though hardly logically) explicable both as aberrations and as expressions of "real" Indian behavior.

Just as Indian events had, it appeared, demonstrated the colonial mind's grasp of politics there, so Hoare's successful maneuvering to get the reforms through his own Conservative party proved the domestic political acumen of the Tory leadership. By means of careful concessions to influential MPs like Austen Chamberlain, as well as by skillful public relations and, ultimately, by challenging Conservatives to eject Baldwin from the leadership and split the party if they did not approve of his Indian policies – and thus quite intentionally daring Tories to give Labour a potential return to power – Hoare, Butler and their colleagues ultimately got their way.[160] This was hardly surprising, given the tone Hoare's supporters had adopted in addressing the party; in one speech alone Lord Hardinge, himself a member of the JSC, called opponents "wreckers" out to "destroy the Government and the Conservative Party" through "absolutely unpatriotic actions."[161] In their minds, the difficult part was over. Only the implementation of the new Indian federation remained.

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160 On the leadership's machinations, see both Bridge and Graham Stewart.

161 Clipping of Hardinge's speech in Tunbridge Wells, CHAR 2/241a/24.

Chapter 5
Preventing an "unholy row": Indian Reform, Commercial Policy and Lancashire, 1933–1935[1]

Just as those who championed the federal plan as the antidote to Indian nationalism relied upon political intelligence and perceptions in making policy, so they also required a good deal of domestic political and intra-party information in getting the reform scheme successfully enacted into law. The next two chapters detail the variety of tactics and calculations that politicians like Sam Hoare and R.A. Butler, and colonial officials both at home and abroad, employed in shepherding the federation proposal through the British political landscape. These maneuverings involved more than legislative gamesmanship though. The question of India's future raised further queries about the direction and prospects of the British Empire itself. As both supporters and opponents of the reforms battled for political advantage, they exposed the varied and often complicated ways in which even supposedly staunch supporters of empire conceived of Britain's colonial purpose, the role these territories played in regards to the metropole, and the best way to secure British global influence in the post-war world. Imperial sentiment was hardly monolithic, often in flux, and at times not nearly as determinative in political decisions as the empire's most ardent supporters might have hoped.

Hard Times in Lancashire

The decades following the First World War were not kind to Lancashire. Before 1914 the region had provided a quarter of all British exports and employed nearly a million people; by 1931, however, this area saw over 40 per cent unemployment. Only half of all available spindles were still in use, an idleness that had severe knock-on effects in other areas in Lancashire, including the docks of Liverpool and Birkenhead and the mines of St. Helen's and Wigan.[2] Many in Lancashire, especially in the business community, looked to Westminster for aid in this crisis. Lancashire manufacturers refused to recognize their own failures to modernize the textile industry, to incorporate new technology or to cut production costs as factors in the industry's disastrous slide, but instead were adamant that Lancashire's revival

1 An earlier version of this chapter appeared as "'An unholy row in Lancashire': The Textile Lobby, Conservative Politics, and Indian Policy, 1931–1935," *Twentieth Century British History* 14/2 (2003), pp. 93–111.

2 J.K. Walton, *Lancashire*, pp. 329–337; J. Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap*, pp. 11–14.

would only follow the removal of certain international obstacles to trade, especially the customs duties imposed on British exports by the Government of India.[3]

These Indian tariffs were the product of the 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford reforms which had instituted both dyarchy and an Indian Fiscal Autonomy Convention, a device which allowed New Delhi to set an independent tariff policy. This measure, designed both to serve the fiscal needs of the Indian Government and to appease and divert from the Congress ranks moderate Indian businessmen, soon led to increased duties on Lancashire goods. These tariffs seemed to be the final blow to Lancashire's hopes of reviving its pre-1914 dominance over the Indian market. The war itself had forced greater import substitution in India, and had thus facilitated the dramatic rise of textile industry in Western India, especially in Bombay and Ahmedabad; at the same time the wartime decline of British exports to India had also provided an opportunity for cheap Japanese cotton goods to enter the Indian market.[4] Lancashire's position grew even worse in 1930 and 1931. Gandhi's civil disobedience campaign included a boycott of British goods. Moreover, faced with its own need to preserve a balanced budget and meet its own international obligations, the Government of India moved to increase its revenue by increasing duties on British goods from 11 per cent in early 1930 to 25 per cent by October, 1931.[5] Lancashire, which had shipped half its total output to India in pre-war days, was left to fume and to lash out at a British Government which was allowing a subordinate administration in New Delhi to ruin the traditional powerhouse of English industry.

Lancashire business groups and their representatives in Parliament were assured of receiving close attention to their grievances from the leaders of all three major parties. There were a multitude of reasons for which Liberals, Labourites and Tories prized the votes of Northwestern England. The region's most obvious attraction was its nearly 70 seats in the House of Commons.[6] Lancashire also held strong symbolic importance for each of the political parties. For Liberals, the county was the party's very birthplace, home of the Manchester free-trade lobby of the mid-nineteenth century, bastion of Asquith's "New Liberalism," and the area where Liberals might make their last stand and prevent the party's absolute demise in the interwar years.[7] Lancashire remained practically the only traditionally industrial area which Labour had not been able to make its own by the early

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[3] Singleton, *Lancashire on the Scrapheap*, p. 14.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[5] Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 337–345.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 13; Maria Misra, "Gentlemanly capitalism and the Raj: British policy in India between the world wars," in R. Dummett, ed., *Gentlemanly Capitalism and British Imperialism: The New Debate on Empire* (London, 1999), pp. 157–174.

[7] See Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*; Williamson, *National crisis and National Government.*

1930s. However, Lancashire loomed largest in the eyes of the Conservatives, who thought the county vital to the party's pretensions to be the true representatives of the national interest. Since the late nineteenth century, Lancashire, and Liverpool especially, had been virtually the only source of working-class support for the Tories. Liverpudlian workers, associating the Liberals with the immigrant Irish who had thronged to the city in the late nineteenth century, had provided the basis for party claims that "Tory democracy" and Disraelian "One Nation" Toryism were indeed attainable. And as the Conservatives coped in the early twentieth century with an ever-expanding electorate, they continued to view Lancashire as the best possible place to attract working-class voters.[8] This effort achieved some success by the 1920s, though Liverpool was the only real source of urban working-class votes. The Conservatives did, however, definitely benefit in other respects from the demise of their former rivals, the Liberals. After the Liberal split during the First World War, the party of Gladstone and Asquith never recovered, and despite a party reunion in the mid-1920s, the Liberals remained plagued by financial and organizational woes. For many middle-class Liberals, who even before 1914 had had some reservations about party's progressive notions, the Conservative party seemed to offer the only viable alternative to a Labour movement which had emerged from the war with a full head of steam. In Lancashire, where the Liberal ideal of Free Trade also seemed an especially untenable position by the late 1920s, middle-class voters in the Manchester suburbs and the large mill towns began to favor the Conservatives. Thus, while Lancashire seemed unlikely to help further the Conservative claim to represent the masses, the rise of middle-class Tory support there did provide the party with a base above the Midlands, at least enabling Tories to claim that they were not a regional party confined solely to the comfortable South of England.

If Lancashire was important to all British political parties, it also demanded constant attention, since the task of winning Lancashire was equaled only by that of holding on to it thereafter. All three major parties had made in-roads into the region by 1914, and in the interwar years a great number of marginal seats remained, especially in constituencies where enough Liberal votes remained to create real three-way contests. The Conservative leadership had become aware of the vicissitudes of Lancashire politics in rather painful fashion in the 1920s. In the 1923 General Election, fought on Baldwin's proposals for tariff reform, Liberals, rejuvenated briefly by the cries of "Free Trade" and "Dear Food," had themselves taken twelve seats from the Tories, and had allowed Labour to prevail

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8 See A. Sykes, "Radical Conservatism and the Working Classes in Edwardian England: The Case of the Workers Defence Union," *English Historical Review* CXIII/454 (November 1998), pp. 1180–1209.

in at least ten three-cornered contests.[9] The Tories had taken back nearly all of these seats in 1924, after the 1923 contest had resulted in the first ever Labour Government, and now held roughly two-thirds of all Lancashire seats, although at least half of these Tory seats remained in the marginal category. The see-saw dropped the Conservatives hard in 1929, as Baldwin's uninspired "Safety First" campaign fell flat not just in Lancashire but throughout the country. The Tories lost 21 Lancashire seats, of which three went to Liberals, briefly resuscitated by their Keynesian manifesto on ending unemployment. In 11 other constituencies, strong Liberal showings split the "anti-Socialist" vote and permitted Labour to take the seats.[10] 1931 saw yet another reversal of Conservative fortunes, as the party capitalized on Labour's collapse of August 1931, and, under the aegis of the National Government, took nearly 90 per cent of Lancashire seats. Yet even this great triumph could not permanently allay concerns about maintaining the Tory position in the county. The gains of 1931 looked substantial, but they were far from safe. Nearly 20 of these seats represented a retrieval of 1929's losses, while 12 were gains in previously strong Labour constituencies. Of these latter seats, nine went back to Labour in 1935. Overall, then, although the Conservatives had been able to maintain a stable base of about 20 seats in Lancashire throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, they could not yet claim a secure majority of the county's seats.

The Politics of India in Lancashire

For Sam Hoare and the Tory leadership, therefore, Lancashire was certain to command tender solicitude, no matter what the issues of the day. That the central Tory concern in the period was to work out a plan of political reform for India only intensified the party leaders' apprehensions about Conservatism's future in the cotton county. Granting greater political autonomy to India, no matter how many safeguards, was not going to elicit enthusiasm among textile manufacturers, and their associates, who held that India enjoyed far too much freedom in policy-making already. However, while the Conservative hierarchy had to reckon with the future electoral consequences in Lancashire of pursuing Indian reform, they faced a more immediate challenge following the 1931 election: preventing the 50

[9] For the former: Royton, Lonsdale, Lancaster, Southport, Blackpool, Darwen, Manchester (Withington, Rusholme, Moss Side, Exchange, Blackley), Liverpool (West Derby, Wavertree); for the latter: Warrington, Salford (South, West), Nelson and Colne, Leigh, Eccles, Burnley, Bolton, Preston, Oldham.

[10] The former: Darwen, Manchester (Withington, Blackley); the latter: Salford (West, North), Rossendale, Eccles, Ashton-under-Lyne, Burnley, Bolton, Bootle, Blackburn, Oldham, Manchester Hulme.

Lancashire MPs in the parliamentary party from crippling any effort at Indian reform before it even got started. These 50 Members alone could not halt the leadership's plans, but they could provide a solid, symbolically compelling nucleus around which anti-reform forces within the party could cluster. For this reason, Churchill, Page Croft and Lloyd had all moved to align Die-Hard opposition to Indian policy with Lancashire's.[11] A concerted protest by Lancashire MPs against Indian reform might cause others in the Tory parliamentary party to abandon the party leadership over India out of concern that continuing with Hoare's plan was sure to alienate a county whose support was of vital importance to the party's image and prospects.[12] Hoare's dilemma was acute: he might attract Lancashire by reducing Indian tariffs as a condition of political reform, but such a maneuver would certainly jeopardize any attempt to woo the support of a settlement of Indian merchants and mill-owners, who he perceived as a vital part of anti-extremist Indian opinion. Again, however, to do nothing for Lancashire might mean a Manchester-led revolt within the Tory ranks and the defeat of any Indian reforms at all. Neither India nor Lancashire could be ignored. The question was what could be done for them.

The task of soothing Lancashire's businessmen had occupied the India Office well before Hoare took over in late 1931. With their eyes on domestic politics, both Conservative and Labour Secretaries and their staffs had devoted much energy after 1928 to pleading Lancashire's case for tariff reductions to the Indian Government. These "gentlemanly capitalists" at Westminster indeed seemed determined to put aside the orthodox fiscal idea that New Delhi's first duty was to gain enough revenue to meet its external obligations.[13] What they listened to was the determined lobbying of the Manchester cotton-men. Lancashire had supporters at the highest level: in early 1929 the President of the Board of Trade, Philip Cunliffe-Lister, warned his colleague at the India Office: "Never was Cotton in such an evil plight."[14] The entrance of the Labour Government in mid-1929, a government which had made significant gains in Lancashire in the General Election, meant little change in India Office attitudes towards the cotton lobby, save only that it was now Wedgwood

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11 On organizing opinion in Lancashire, see Page Croft to Beaverbrook, 12 March 1930, Churchill Archives Page Croft Papers (CRFT), 1/4/4; L. Stuart (IES) to T. Ashurst (Cotton Spinners and Manufacturers Assoc.), 18 May 1931, Bodleian Library Stuart Papers, Mss. Eng. hist. c.609/31–32.

12 For examples of Hoare's thinking about the intra-party influence of the Lancashire delegation, see Hoare to Willingdon, 16 October 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/38–46; Hoare to Willingdon, 1 December 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/915–919; Hoare to Willingdon, 2 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1162–1166; Hoare to Willingdon, 10 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1213–1219a.

13 See Misra, "Gentlemanly Capitalism and the Raj," pp. 170–171.

14 Cunliffe-Lister to Peel, 25 January 1929, L/PO/1/40/120–123; Peel to Irwin, 29 January 1929, L/PO/1/40/110–113; Cunliffe-Lister to Peel, 8 February 1929, L/PO/1/40/84.

Benn, not Lord Peel, who became Lancashire's *de facto* representative to the Indian Government.[15] It was Benn's misfortune to occupy the India Office during the period in which Indian tariffs nearly doubled, and 1930 saw the formation of an even more focused lobby in Lancashire: the Cotton Duties Repeal Association of Manchester.[16] The cotton lobby did not neglect the Conservatives either, out of office though they were, and made approaches at the same time to Baldwin, Hoare and Neville Chamberlain, as well as to Lord Stonehaven, the party chairman.[17] Thus, when Hoare assumed the Indian Secretaryship in September 1931 he faced not a resumption of Lancashire lobbying, but simply an intensification of pressure that had been there for some time.

Events after September 1931 continued to work against Lancashire's perceived interests. Customs duties were increased again in the fall of 1931, taking them to the full 25 per cent tariff. The Ottawa Conference on Imperial economic cooperation, held in the Canadian capital in the summer of 1932, excluded cotton textiles from the subjects under discussion, even though British and Indian trade representatives had been invited to the conference. And the appointment of a Tariff Board in India that same year failed to yield any positive results for Manchester interests, as the Board instead recommended a sweeping increase in duties on all imports at the end of 1932.[18] Despite a series of negotiations between British and Indian textile manufacturers in 1933, Indian tariffs on British goods remained unchanged from the level reached two years earlier. Moreover, the British Government had been unable to work out any sort of trade agreement with the Japanese over the latter's "dumping" of cotton textiles in India. The subsequent rise in duties on Japanese imports to India, placed by the Indian Government at 75 per cent of the goods' prices, was not, however, accompanied by a decrease in tariffs on British goods, and the cheapness of the Japanese goods in the first place alleviated some of the sting from such punitive tariffs. Perhaps the last straw occurred in the summer of 1934 when the Australian Government announced that it was raising its customs duties on British cotton goods, a development which provoked threats in Lancashire of a boycott of Australian meat and dairy products.[19]

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15 Peel to Irwin, 18 July 1929, L/PO/1/40/58; W. Graham (Board of Trade) to Peel, 17 September 1929, L/PO/1/30; Benn to Irwin, 6 January 1930, L/PO/1/30; Manchester Chamber of Commerce to Benn, 12 March 1930, L/PO/1/40/170–176; Benn to Irwin, 19 February 1931, L/PO/1/30.

16 This group invited MacDonald to join in April 1930: see L/PO/1/40/301.

17 Hacking to Baldwin, 27 April 1931, SB105/18–19; Baldwin to Hacking, 27 April 1931, SB105/21–22; Chorlton to Stonehaven, 22 May 1931, forwarded to Baldwin by the latter, 29 May 1931, SB105/25–27.

18 Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 373–376.

19 *Manchester Guardian*, 12 August, 17 and 21 November 1934.

Lancashire's efforts to organize pressure on Hoare and the Government, and to lobby for greater opportunities for Britain's textile trade with India, centered on the activities of the region's largest, most integrated, group, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce (MCC), its Secretary, Sir Raymond Streat, and its two Presidents during the early 1930s, T.D. Barlow and Richard Bond. These three individuals remained in near-constant contact with both the India Office and the Board of Trade, as well as with Lord Derby, the most powerful Conservative in the region and a doughty defender of local interests.[20] A hearty letter of congratulation from the MCC was among the first pieces of correspondence to greet Hoare on his arrival at the India Office.[21] It was a sign of things to come, as the MCC, having warned Hoare that "public agitation" in Lancashire would only increase if Indian tariff policy remained unchanged, made sure to keep the India Office informed of the cotton lobby's views on the Indian Government's annual budget, the workings of the Indian Tariff Board and, eventually, Hoare's White Paper proposal for an All-India Federation.[22] The pressure did not abate even as Hoare's plan gained steam, and as some opposition to the federal idea dissipated, through 1934 and 1935. Representatives from the MCC sought the ear of P.J. Grigg, who was departing Britain in 1934 to become the Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council in New Delhi.[23] Even as the Government of India Bill moved through its final phases in the Commons, Streat, with some aid from Derby, moved on to the pressing question of tariffs on Lancashire goods exported to Burma, which under the Bill would no longer be a part of India, but instead a separately governed territory.[24]

The MCC, an umbrella group with members not just from the textile trade but from all areas of Lancashire's commercial life, was not the only Lancashire trade group which followed Indian political reform and tariff policy keenly. Other manufacturers' and employers' associations, representing more specific parts of the cotton trade, and whose membership overlapped therefore with that of the MCC, also made representations to the India Office. Among those actively prodding the Government over Lancashire's plight were the Cotton

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20 *Lancashire and Whitehall: The Diary of Sir Raymond Streat, Vol. I: 1931–1939*, Marguerite Dupree, ed. (Manchester: 1987), pp. 107, 17 October 1931 (hereafter: "Streat diary").

21 Barlow to Hoare, 4 September 1931, L/PO/1/48/120.

22 Streat to W.D. Croft (IO), 23 December 1931, L/PO/1/48/59–65; Streat to Croft, 22 January 1932, L/PO/1/48/47–49; Barlow to Hoare, 5 February 1932, L/PO/1/48/45; Streat diary, pp. 138–142, 27 March 1932; Streat to Croft, 4 January 1933, L/PO/1/30; Hoare to Willingdon, 31 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/71; Bond to Hoare, 12 April 1933, L/PO/1/51/243–246; Bond to Hoare, 23 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/212–215; Barlow to Derby, 26 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/202–204; Streat diary, pp. 210–212, 14 March 1933; Streat diary, pp. 226–230, 3 April 1933.

23 Streat diary, pp. 306–308, 6 and 8 March 1934.

24 Streat diary, pp. 355–357 and 386–389, January 1935 and 20 June 1935.

Spinners and Manufacturers Association: the Oldham Chamber of Commerce; the Blackburn Cotton Employers' Association, the India Merchants' Bureau and the Oldham Master Cotton Spinners' Association.[25] In some trading circles, in fact, there was an underlying suspicion that the MCC was not going all out in defending Lancashire. The *Guardian* reported in early 1934 that some members of the Manchester Royal Exchange did not mistrust the entire MCC, but merely "those of foreign birth," specifically the "middlemen" who were suspected of loyalty only to their balance sheets. These accusations, contained in direct quotes given to the newspaper by members of the Exchange, manufacturers all, certainly revealed tensions between manufacturers and traders in Lancashire, and perhaps indicated some anti-Semitism underlying the conflict.[26]

The most serious effort to undermine any scheme to give India further political and fiscal autonomy came from a group formed in early 1933 as a rival to the more moderate and cautious MCC: the Cotton Trade League. Formed with the patronage of at least two MPs, including one representative from Manchester itself, and composed of at least 50 firms involved in cotton manufacturing, this organization sponsored excursions to Lancashire by Churchill, Lloyd and Page Croft among others. Its members did not renounce their affiliation with the MCC, and indeed began to lobby within the MCC for a more direct and aggressive attack on the Government's India policy.[27] Douglas Hacking, the dean of the Lancashire Conservative MPs, warned Hoare within six months of the Cotton Trade League's founding, that the group had "a large following + the agitation is spreading" and that there was "going to be an unholy row in Lancashire unless we are very careful."[28] Hacking's assessment of the state of opinion in the Northwest of England only confirmed the soundings of Lancashire's mood which Butler, Hoare's deputy at the India Office, had taken a few months earlier.[29] Butler even wondered if Derby, a Tory centrist from whom Hoare hoped to gain vital support for his Indian plan, would be able to assume such a role with all of Lancashire arrayed against Indian reform.[30]

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25 Ashurst to Hoare, 11 January 1933, L/PO/1/30; W. Brass, MP to India Office, 29 March 1933, L/PO/1/30.

26 *Guardian*, 2 February 1934; for tensions between traders and mill-owners, especially over the question of manufacturing efficiency, see M.B. Rose, *Firms, Networks and Business Values: The British and American Cotton Industries since 1750* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 198–249.

27 *Guardian*, 14 January 1933.

28 Hacking to Hoare, 31 July 1933, L/PO/1/30.

29 Butler to parents, 1 February 1933, RAB D48/958–959; Memorandum: "Account of meeting between RAB and Lord Donrussil on the state of Conservative Party feeling over India," 14 February 1933, RAB F1/32; India Office memorandum by Butler, 2 March 1933, RAB F4/69–71.

30 Butler to parents, 22 June 1933, RAB D48/980–983.

It was not only the commercial groups in Lancashire who took up the subject of India's future; opposition to further Indian autonomy inevitably spread to various Conservative organizations as well. At first glance, anti-reform feeling did not seem particularly widespread. Only nine Lancashire MPs had voted for an anti-reform motion of February 1933, and overt hostility to Indian federation was by no means uniform among the Lancashire constituency associations, with only three recording strong opposition: Nelson and Colne, Middleton and Prestwich and Blackpool.[31] The India Defence League, the successor to the Indian Empire Society, seemed to make headway in only a few Manchester constituencies despite the feverish efforts of the IDL's local organizer, the indefatigable H.Y. Robinson, a partner in a Manchester cotton firm.[32] Yet, though by no means general, there were also discouraging signs for Hoare coming from the region. Such signs were magnified to larger proportions by his panicky pessimism about all things Indian and Lancastrian, particularly when they intersected. In February and April 1933, two of the larger Conservative groups in the Northwest had expressed some disquiet over the situation in India. The Lancashire and Cheshire Provincial Area, representing the region's constituencies, urged the party's National Executive to safeguard the cotton trade and give it "a fair and reasonable chance to compete in the Indian market." A somewhat less important, though still numerically significant, group, the Lancashire Provincial Area Federation of Junior Unionist Associations, passed a resolution of their "great concern [over] any attempt to institute any form of Central Government in India."[33] Butler's efforts to form a Manchester branch of the pro-reform Union of Britain and India did not make much headway, indicating at best a lack of enthusiasm for the Indian scheme.[34] Lancashire, and Manchester especially, remained the central target of Churchill's effort to form a critical mass of opposition to Hoare's plan.[35] Lord Rothermere, proprietor of the right-wing *Daily Mail*, had by mid-1933 begun to embrace the cotton industry's cause, claiming that British responsibility for the defense of India required India to open its markets to British commerce.[36] From 1933

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31 Nelson and Colne CUA to Churchill, 29 May 1933, CHAR 2/193/116; Middleton and Prestwich CUA, Annual General Meeting, 4 March 1933, association records at Lancs. RO PLC 1/2; Blackpool CUA, Executive Committee Meeting, 3 April 1933, Lancs. RO PLC 5/1/2.

32 Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," p. 281. Churchill's papers are full of correspondence from Robinson, much of it panglossian in its assessment of the IDL's popularity in Lancashire.

33 National Union, Executive Committee, 15 February 1933, CPA (microfilm); Lancs. Fed. of JUA, Annual General Meeting, 1 April 1933, federation minute-book, CPA (Bodleian Library).

34 Butler to Owen Tweedy (UBI Secy.), 14 March 1935, RAB F74/188.

35 Page Croft to Churchill, 30 October 1933, CHAR 2/194/77.

36 *Daily Mail*, 21 July 1933.

through 1935, Lancashire, and Oldham and Manchester in particular, received the attention of all the leading Die-Hards: Page Croft, Wolmer, Lloyd, the young Randolph Churchill and the Duchess of Atholl. The elder Churchill was able to draw a crowd of 3,000 in Manchester in June 1934, although not even the most Die Hard Lancashire MP appeared with him.[37]

Nor was there much in Lancashire electoral politics to cheer the Conservative leadership in the crucial period of 1933–1934. At the two parliamentary by-elections in the region during these years, the Tories managed to retain the seats, but saw their massive majorities of 1931 reduced significantly. At the Liverpool Exchange constituency, the Conservative majority fell from 38 per cent to 10 per cent, and the result was even more dramatic in the Rusholme division of Manchester where the majority dropped from 52 per cent to 11 per cent. In local government elections held in November 1934, the Conservatives suffered substantial losses, as Labour gained 15 seats in the Manchester and Salford councils, and another 13 in Liverpool's, as well as outright control of Oldham and Burnley councils. These election figures could not easily be dismissed by Hoare and the Conservative leadership, for, although it was not possible to know definitely what Lancashire voters had intended, it was possible to make some reasonable deductions about the meaning of these results.[38] The plain fact was that in the one area in Britain where Indian policies and tariffs were not only contentious and widely publicized issues, but also matters of economic life and death, the Tories, the party whose leadership seemed intent on Indian reform, were flagging at the polls. The results did not indicate that the Lancashire Tories were turning in droves to Labour – this seems an unlikely course for the predominantly middle-class Tories of that region, no matter how enraged they were – but the results did point to something else. Tory voters seemed to be staying at home, abstaining from voting. Voter turnout at the two bye-elections had been much smaller than that at the 1931 General Election, not an unusual occurrence in itself, but the decline in Conservative voters in these elections at this time seemed troubling. Bye-elections and local council elections had traditionally been vehicles whereby voters could express their disenchantment with a government's policies. And these by-elections specifically offered a rare chance for Tory voters to tell the party what they thought of something as controversial and important as Indian reform. Moreover, as we've already seen, Conservatives were usually a very active bunch, keenly interested in politics, and hardly the sort who voted only in the large General Elections, but were instead highly likely to vote whenever given the chance. Turnout for these elections, then, should have been much heavier.

37 *Guardian*, 27 June 1934.

38 On the challenge that Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists was mounting to Conservatives in the region, see Martin Pugh, "Lancashire, Cotton and Indian Reform: Conservative Controversies in the 1930s," *Twentieth-Century British History* 15/2 (2004), pp. 143–151.

That it was not heavy, and that the Tory majorities fell so sharply, pointed to large number of Tory abstentions. The most likely cause for these was the persistence of conflicted feelings about Indian reform among the county's Conservatives, who could not now vote for their party and its current leaders, but had little idea what else to do. If this continued, many marginal Tory seats in the county would be in danger. The council election losses might even demonstrate that working-class Tories, especially in urban areas like Liverpool, where male unemployment in 1933 was still over 30 per cent, had given up hopes of a Conservative rescue of Lancashire and were now taking a gamble on Labour. With these election results, and the likely explanations for them taken into account, it is hardly surprising that Hoare remained convinced in 1933 and 1934 that Lancashire's discontent was real, and could certainly serve as a spark for an intra-party revolt over India.

One might argue that Hoare need not have concerned himself overmuch with developments in Lancashire and that the opposition there stood no chance of altering Conservative Indian policy. Many Lancashire MPs, holding onto marginal seats, could not afford to align with the Die-Hard Tory right.[39] Cain and Hopkins have gone so far as to argue that Lancashire lacked real political weight in Westminster by the 1920s.[40] Even if true (which is questionable to say the least), Hoare did not enjoy the luxury of hindsight; and more specifically, he may not have seen the large number of marginal seats in Lancashire as a blessing, that is, arenas where Labour's traditional voters might prevent an outbreak of Die-Hardism. By 1934 in fact, representatives of the Textile Workers' Association had joined the Lancashire delegations which journeyed to London to lobby the India Office for a reduction in customs duties, indicating that even unionized workers might desert their party if it meant a chance to keep their jobs.[41] That Hoare and the Tory leadership viewed the cotton lobby as potentially capable of disrupting the party, however, did not mean that they responded to the demands being made in Manchester's Free Trade Hall and Oldham's Town Hall with a strategy of abject appeasement. Though Hoare sought to calm some of Lancashire's concerns, he also took measures calculated to divide and neutralize the opinions of the cotton-men.

Hoare's most energetic attempts to mollify Lancashire opinion came in his efforts to do something, anything, to reduce Indian customs duties. From the moment he took over at the India Office, he bombarded the unfortunate Willingdon in nearly every third letter to New Delhi with schemes, requests and pleas for the reduction of Indian tariffs. An examination of Hoare's letters to the Viceroy, written as far as possible on a weekly schedule, shows that the

39 McEwen, "Unionist and Conservative Members of Parliament," pp. 439–440; Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," p. 156.

40 Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, Volume II*, pp. 177–179.

41 *Guardian*, 2 November 1934.

Indian Secretary raised the tariff issue in nearly every third letter. Such frequency indicated one of two things: either Hoare was convinced that these tariffs should be reduced or he viewed the unhappiness in Lancashire as so serious that he must make a huge public display of seeking tariff reductions, even though he personally found the prospect unlikely and distasteful.[42] Despite Hoare's efforts to alert Willingdon to the "somewhat demented frame of mind" in Lancashire, however, the Viceroy was unwilling to contemplate reducing tariffs on British goods, although he was willing to raise duties on Japanese and other foreign competitors.[43] To the Viceroy, it seemed foolhardy to even broach the question of tariff reductions, which would call into doubt the Fiscal Autonomy Convention and unite all members of the nationalist movement in opposition.[44] The most interesting part of this exchange between Hoare and Willingdon, at least in light of recent debates about the nature of British imperialism, was that neither's actions seemed to support the thesis that "gentlemanly capitalism' dominated imperial policy-making. If Hoare's attempts at tariff reductions were sincere, then he could not have been absolutely wedded to the notion that the Indian Government must remain fiscally sound and committed primarily to meeting obligations to its foreign (British) creditors. If his lobbying was merely an attempt to appease Lancashire, this was an indication that British manufacturing interests still held some sway in imperial politics, and especially in the Conservative Party, and could not be neglected in favor of London-based financiers. Willingdon, although he upheld the tariffs, seemed to do so not simply out of concern for Indian revenues, but since he viewed the tariffs as an important gesture which could prevent the rise of a truly monolithic Indian nationalist movement. Both men, whether in London or New Delhi, seemed to realize that their primary goal was to keep India under British control, without which Indian fiscal stability would cease even to be a concern.[45]

Hoare and Neville Chamberlain also acted with elaborate circuitousness to keep a rein on the Manchester lobby. This episode has been chronicled by Basudev Chatterji, but deserves some reiteration.[46] In September 1933 the Government of India, acting in its own capacity, but with the India Office hanging on every word, began new trade negotiations with Japan, as India had five months earlier denounced Japanese trading practices and renounced the India-Japanese convention which had regulated trade since 1904. The Japanese had responded with a boycott of Indian-grown raw cotton. In November 1933 the Japanese

[42] See Hoare to Derby, 26 November 1934, L/PO/1/51/129.

[43] Hoare to Willingdon, 6 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/172–176.

[44] Willingdon to Hoare, 9 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/209–211; Willingdon to Hoare, 1 December 1933, L/PO/1/54/59–61.

[45] Misra, "Gentlemanly capitalism and the Raj," p. 171.

[46] Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 390–395.

were still playing a good hand aggressively, demanding tariff concessions from India and threatening to continue their boycott of raw cotton. However, as both the Viceroy and officials in London realized, a cave-in to these conditions by the Indian Government might pacify Indian cotton-growers, but could easily provoke mayhem in Lancashire and a widespread Tory cry that Lancashire had been sold out to Japan. Hoare and Neville Chamberlain, with the full approval of the Cabinet, concocted a plan which would allow the Indian Government to call the Japanese bluff without provoking fury at home. Chamberlain, presiding at the Treasury, guaranteed that Britain would indemnify an Indian Government effort to buy up raw cotton if the Japanese made good their threat. Thus, the British Cabinet, including Baldwin and MacDonald, had mobilized to allow the Viceroy to face down the Japanese and still preserve Lancashire's ever-shrinking share of the Indian market.[47] Successful Parliamentary passage of Indian political reform was evidently worth the investment in one or two million bales of raw cotton.[48] The strategy worked, as the Japanese did not abandon the talks and soon settled a trade agreement which did not pose such an immediate threat to Lancashire.[49] The possibility of anti-Indian reform agitation had prompted concerted action by the National Government, action which demonstrated that it was not only Hoare who feared the cotton lobby, and that the progress of Indian federation sometimes required departures from fiscal rectitude. It is not surprising that Chamberlain especially was glad to keep these maneuvers secret, refusing to allow Derby to publicize the Government's efforts in Lancashire in 1934, for fear that, among other things, it might encourage other industries to look to the Exchequer for similar aid.[50]

In dealing with Lancashire, Hoare also continued to employ some familiar strategies, keeping a close watch on opinion in the county, dispensing pro-reform propaganda and speakers, and invoking party loyalty. However, Hoare did produce one additional stratagem for neutralizing the vitriol of the cotton lobby. Just as he had in India, he crafted a plan to cultivate "moderate" opinion, this time not in Bombay but in Blackburn.

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[47] Hoare to Willingdon, 28 November 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/13a/82; for an account which stresses the strong feelings in the Cabinet for this cotton buyout, see N. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 17 December 1933, NC 18/1/854; see also Neville Chamberlain's diary, 1 January 1934, NC 2/23a.

[48] This account draws on accounts of this transaction which the India Office wrote up in 1946 at the request of Hoare, who was writing his memoirs. See H.A. Rumbold memorandum, 7 December 1946, L/PO/1/54/2 and W. Rayner to Rumbold, 7 December 1946, L/PO/1/54/3.

[49] Willingdon to Hoare, 8 December 1933, L/PO/1/54/20.

[50] N. Chamberlain to Derby, 31 July 1934, 920 DER [17]33; see also Rumbold memorandum cited above.

Hoare, Derby and the Manchester Chamber of Commerce

Hoare's intention was to separate the "reasonable" men of Manchester from the extremists in order to prevent the emergence of a solid Lancashire bloc in opposition to Indian reform, and to make sure that nervous Conservative MPs could not use Lancashire's distress as an excuse to vote against the party leadership over India. There was evidence that the membership of the party had begun to grow weary of some of the extremist tactics in Lancashire, and that the Tory ranks might be secured for Indian federation if that scheme could demonstrate that it had support among solid and respectable elements there. In 1930 the Conservative Research Department had concluded that most of the Lancashire agitation over safeguarding the cotton trade had not come from the "thoughtful men" in the business, but instead from those who were unwilling to embrace technological progress and scientific management in the industry, preferring instead to rely on "the rule-of-thumb methods of the past."[51] Such an assessment echoed Baldwin's remark two years earlier that "Before the War [the cotton manufacturers] took things much too easy. Now they are up against it."[52] This notion was put abroad by the India Office, and received further publicity when British and Japanese trade representatives met in 1934.[53] Even Lord Derby, Lancashire's greatest advocate at Westminster, began to decry the "Victorian" views of some outspoken manufacturers in the county.[54] Hoare had put his vision of the region's inhabitants rather plainly: there were "the comparatively few reasonable people" and "the majority who take a narrow view and are embittered by their economic misfortunes."[55]

Simply denouncing the most vociferous opponents of Indian reform in Lancashire, portraying them as relics of an earlier age and opponents of inevitable commercial progress, was not sufficient though. Hoare also needed a public indication from other members of the county's business community that they were, if not wildly enthusiastic, at least accepting of the need for Indian reform and not insecure about the potential impact of greater Indian autonomy on the

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51 H. Brooke memorandum on visit to Liverpool, 6 February 1930, CPA(Bodl.) CRD 1/10/1/2; Brooke memorandum on cotton trade, 13 May 1930, CPA(Bodl.) CRD 1/10/1/3; N. Chamberlain, "Summary of report by Committee of the Economic Advisory Council on the Cotton Industry," 14 July 1930, CPA(Bodl.) CRD 1/10/1/4.

52 Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diary*, Keith Middlemas, ed. (Oxford, 1969–71), vol. II, p. 137 (17 May 1928).

53 W.D. Croft to Hoare, 18 November 1931, L/PO/1/30; Croft to Streat, 14 January 1932, L/PO/1/48/51–57; Amery diary, II/379, 16 April 1934; Hoare to Willingdon, 2 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1162–1166; *Guardian*, 17 October 1934.

54 Derby to Stonehaven, 10 October 1934, 920DER[17] 31/8.

55 Hoare to Willingdon, 6 January 1933, L/PO/1/30; see also Butler to Brabourne, 19 April 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/197–205.

textile trade. Only this sort of testimony could serve to keep wavering Tories from claiming that Lancashire's plight required that they vote against All India Federation. The first step taken by the Conservative leadership in their quest to secure some moderate support in Lancashire was to recruit a powerful ally, a Conservative who might act as the leadership's and the Government's ambassador to the cotton lobby, someone who possessed credibility in Lancashire, political clout there, and who was prepared to support the Government's Indian program. There was only one choice: Lord Derby.

The Derbys had been a tremendous presence in both local and national politics since the early nineteenth century. By the early twentieth century, when Edward Stanley became the seventeenth Earl, the family had established itself as the great patron of Lancashire Conservatives, and thus the powerful advocate at Westminster for Lancashire's middle-class and business community. Before assuming his title, the incumbent Lord Derby had served as a Conservative MP, and after his succession he had served in the Cabinet and as Ambassador to France in the early 1920s. Although he viewed himself as the defender of Lancashire's interests, Derby was not a Die Hard extremist, but rather a fairly hard-headed realist and pragmatist, accustomed to the usual horse-trading of county politics and open to reassessments of Lancashire's economic performance. Derby's assessment of Lord Lloyd was that this Die Hard "was a dangerous person and quite off the rails."[56] But Derby's position within the Conservative ranks, in fact within the upper reaches of the party hierarchy, was made infinitely complex by the prospect of Hoare and Baldwin introducing Indian reform legislation. Though no enthusiast for greater Indian autonomy, Derby felt that Britain was inalterably committed to earlier promises of reform, and even more so once Hoare had announced his formal plan in the 1933 White Paper.[57] Furthermore, he was loath to oppose Baldwin and, like Austen Chamberlain, was concerned that Indian policy not split the party fatally.[58] Yet Derby was equally committed to finding some relief for his "beloved Lancashire" by insuring that Indian reform legislation contained measures which would allow greater entry for its cotton goods into the Indian market.[59] Therefore, he and Hoare shared a common goal: to proceed with Indian reform without raising the fury of Lancashire.

Hoare, aware from long acquaintance with Derby that the Earl had little desire to cause party disunity, had acted immediately upon publication of the White Paper in March 1933 to assure that Derby was on the parliamentary Joint Select Committee (JSC) which would review the proposed legislation. To the

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56 Streat diary, I/107, 17 October 1931.

57 Derby to Hardinge, 22 August 1933, 920DER[17] 37/9.

58 Derby to Hardinge, 1 September 1933, 920DER[17] 37/9; Derby to Salisbury, 9 May 1934, 920DER[17] 37/10.

59 Streat diary, I/251–253, 27 August 1933.

Conservative leadership, Derby's participation on the JSC was vital in several ways. It would reassure Lancashire that the JSC would not ignore their concerns, while also making it much more difficult for Derby to go into opposition should the JSC approve the White Paper proposals. Participation might also give Derby a clearer view of the Indian situation as a whole, especially with regard to the impossibility of reducing Indian tariffs, and he might then be able to convince his constituents that they must seek other solutions to the textile trade's problems.[60] Butler "admire[d] Sam's wisdom in having brought [Derby] into the India controversy," as the Earl would prove "a useful pawn, if one may use so insignificant a word for so mighty a mass, in the subject of commercial discrimination."[61]

In the months immediately following the publication of the India White Paper, as the work of the JSC began, Derby's thinking on the question of Indian customs duties became public, and was in fact more moderate than many in the Conservative ranks, especially those in Lancashire, might have expected. Although he had not given up hope of improving terms of trade with India, he did not think that the best way of rectifying the situation was to call for a reduction of Indian fiscal and political autonomy and oppose the White Paper. He realized, as he later explained to a Conservative friend, that "the fact has to be faced that we cannot in these days force onto India such legislation as we in Lancashire might wish to see carried. If we are to sell in India it has got to be done by goodwill."[62] Derby's position in fact matched that of some of the less extreme elements in Manchester, who by the start of 1933 had grasped that their denunciation of the Indian tariffs had not succeeded and that the Viceroy remained unwilling to contemplate tariff reductions which would spark major Indian protests over the seeming loss of fiscal autonomy. At the MCC, Sir Raymond Streat had begun urging "a rather more constructive line" in Lancashire's strategy.[63] The retiring President, and incoming Chairman, of the MCC, T.D. Barlow, noted in February 1933 that Lancashire's real hope lay in the "rationalizing" of the industry and the pursuit of true imperial economic cooperation, not in a reliance on governments to protect threatened industries.[64] The emergence of this new emphasis on alternative ways of reclaiming part of the Indian market meant that only the Cotton Trade League remained as a public organization devoted to reining in Indian autonomy, a strategy which had clearly not succeeded in the early 1930s and which was closely tied to the Die Hard efforts to block further Indian reform. Derby fervently wished to avoid placing himself as an apparent

[60] Hoare to Willingdon, 17 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/633–641; Butler to parents, 27 July 1933, RAB D49/990–1001.

[61] Butler to Brabourne, 20 July 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/152–158.

[62] Derby to Lord Camrose, 13 February 1934, 920DER[17] 37/10.

[63] Streat diary, I/224–226, 31 March 1933.

[64] *Guardian*, 14 February 1933.

ally of such a group.[65] Even more important, though, this concession by some in Lancashire that Indian autonomy was a reality, and not worth challenging outright, and their willingness to consider other, less combative strategies for improving the position of the cotton industry, gave some hope to Derby that it might be possible to organize some relief for Lancashire without at the same time renouncing the White Paper. That is, it appeared that Streat and Barlow no longer felt it advantageous to oppose the basic premises of the White Paper *per se*, and that, if given some new sort of concession on trade which seemed workable in India, these Manchester moderates might be able to steer a number of their colleagues also away from overt hostility to the White Paper program and towards other means of restoring the textile trade.

Brought into close contact by the early work of the JSC, Hoare and Derby worked out a bargain by early May 1933. If Hoare could come up with some potentially workable ideas for improving Lancashire's trade with India, Derby would press moderate opinion to accept these proposals and would then help men like Streat to counter anti-reform sentiment in the county. This arrangement would allow all involved to benefit. In June 1933 Derby orchestrated a meeting between Hoare and various Manchester businessmen, including Streat and Barlow as well as others from the MCC.[66] When Hoare met the Lancashire men, however, it became clear that there was still some ground between them. The Manchester delegation insisted that any Indian legislation contain a clause allowing for preferential treatment for British goods entering India, or, at the least, a provision allowing the Indian Governor-General to veto tariffs and tariff increases on British goods if he felt there was no fiscal justification for them.[67] Hoare and Runciman, who also attended the meeting, were adamant that such a proposal would undermine any value the White Paper plan might have in India.[68] At this "informal dinner party," as Derby had termed it, on 27 June the Manchester representatives also discussed the evidence which they were scheduled to present on 5 July to the JSC. Hoare and Runciman had received advance copies of this evidence before the meeting, and were dismayed that it reflected the desires for elaborate safeguards which the MCC had also described in person both before

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65 Derby to Streat, 19 July 1934, L/PO/1/51/364–368; Derby to Camrose, 9 February 1934, 920DER[17] 37/10.

66 Derby to Hoare, 25 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/199; Hoare to Derby, 30 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/195–196.

67 For the MCC's position, see Bond to Hoare, 12 April 1933, L/PO/1/51/243–246; Bond to Hoare, 23 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/212–215; Bond to Runciman, 23 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/160–161; Barlow to Derby, 26 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/202–204.

68 Hoare memorandum, March 1933, copy at RAB F60/64–75; Hoare to Derby, 30 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/195–196; Hoare to Willingdon, 6 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/172–176.

and during the meeting.[69] If this evidence became public, as seemed inevitable, it would reveal the dissatisfaction in Lancashire with the White Paper and provide ammunition for the Tory right wing.[70]

This would not mean that all was lost, for the major players in these negotiations, Hoare, Derby and the leadership of the MCC, realized that the present impasse only harmed them all. Fortunately, the MCC's appearance in front of the JSC had to be postponed at the start of July 1933. The Committee was only making slow progress and needed to hear all of the delegates who had traveled from India to testify before turning to hearing others.[71] This delay provided time for further maneuvering by all parties. Hoare, who had suggested earlier that Lancashire might find some benefit through a trade agreement with Indian manufacturers, moved with Derby's energetic assistance to promote this possibility.[72] Sir Homi Mody, the representative of the Bombay Mill-owners Association, was in Britain along with the Indian delegation to the JSC and representatives of British business in India, most notably Edward Benthall, an influential member of the Calcutta business community. Hoare had drafted Benthall into service in late May once he had seen the nature of the MCC's proposed evidence to the Joint Select Committee.[73] The Indian Secretary met with Benthall on 12 June and within a day the latter was working hard to set up a meeting between Mody and Lancashire businessmen.[74] The India Office and Derby assisted him in this task, and managed to arrange such a meeting at the end of June.[75] The discussions between Lancashire and Mody then persisted through most of the summer, with both Derby and the India Office pressing the two parties to make progress or at least to avoid outright hostilities.[76] The more pragmatic members of the MCC, including Streat, Barlow, Sir William Clare Lees and A.D. Campbell, who would soon head the Indian affairs section of the MCC, eventually took up Mody's proposal of further discussions between Lancashire and Indian businessmen in India in September 1933. Their decision sparked a

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[69] Hoare to Derby, 30 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/195–196; Derby to Hoare, 7 June 1933, L/PO/1/51/191; Hoare to Willingdon, 6 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/172–176.

[70] Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, p. 383.

[71] Hoare to Willingdon, 23 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/737–740; Hoare to Willingdon, 30 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/714–745.

[72] Hoare to Bond, 5 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/223–224.

[73] W.D. Croft (IO) to Benthall, 30 May 1933, ECB III/1/132; India Office to Benthall, 9 June 1933, ECB III/1/113.

[74] Benthall to H. Carr, 13 June 1933, ECB III/1/96; Benthall to S. Allan, 14 June 1933, ECB III/1/90; Benthall to Mothersill, 14 June 1933, ECB III/1/89; F.W. Brock to Benthall, 26 June 1933, ECB III/1/28.

[75] Croft to Derby, 7 July 1933, L/PO/1/30; Derby to Croft, 10 July 1933, L/PO/1/30.

[76] Hoare to Willingdon, 18 July 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/145.

"turmoil of talk" in the MCC ranks, but they were able to gain the support of most of the MCC for the mission.[77] In the first place, the MCC leaders realized that this opportunity was an alternative to the failed efforts of the previous few years, but they as well recognized that they might also use their time in India to lobby the Viceroy and others about the forthcoming talks with the Japanese.[78] In late summer the Manchester delegation departed for India.

Simultaneous with these events of the summer of 1933, something else was happening. While Hoare and the India Office had not been pleased with the MCC's proposed submission to the JSC, Derby was also disquieted by its tone, which threatened his efforts to remain in both the Lancashire and White Paper camps.[79] The idea had arisen at the India Office that Derby might point out to the MCC that it should not circulate its evidence, lest its contents disrupt the upcoming negotiations with the Indian mill-owners.[80] As both Basudev Chatterji and Carl Bridge have argued convincingly, although Hoare did have hope that the Lancashire-India negotiations would achieve their ostensible object, his larger purpose was not merely to delay the MCC's evidence, but to have it altered so that it would be less in tune with Die Hard arguments about the inadequacies of the White Paper scheme.[81] Derby managed to get Streat at the MCC to agree not to release the Chamber's evidence until just before its members appeared before the JSC in the late fall. Hoare then pressed on, telling Derby that the publication of the MCC's sentiments as then understood would not only harm the negotiations with Indian mill-owners, but could conceivably cause damage if revealed at any time – the only way to insure a successful and lasting "rapprochement" between Lancashire and India was to make sure the MCC's position "in its present form" never saw the light of day.[82] Such a strategy made sense for the already-overstretched Derby as well. The Earl found Streat and others at the MCC personally open to considering an alteration of the evidence, which Hoare's letter to Derby had implied but not explicitly recommended, but Streat felt that the majority of the MCC was not yet ready to change the earlier statement.[83] Nevertheless, the Lancashire delegation to India, headed by Clare Lees and

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77 Streat diary, I/251–253, 27 August 1933.

78 Streat diary, pp. 253–267.

79 For Derby's efforts to tone down the impact of the MCC evidence, see Derby to Hoare, 29 May 1933, L/PO/1/51/198.

80 India Office memorandum, 7 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/373–375; both Hoare and Butler noted in the margins of the document their approval of this plan.

81 Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, pp. 383–390; Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 122–132.

82 Hoare to Derby, 17 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/369–372; Kershaw to Derby, 31 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/333.

83 Derby to Streat, 19 July 1934, L/PO/1/51/364–368; Derby to Hoare, 19 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/363; Hoare to Derby, 21 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/362; Derby to Hoare, 22 July 1933,

Streat, did themselves convince the MCC not to make public the Chamber's evidence at least until negotiations in India were concluded.[84] Nevertheless, the delegation in no way supported a change in the evidence memorandum, at least while the outcome of the negotiations remained in doubt in late September and October. For Hoare and Derby, though, the time available to alter the MCC's evidence was growing short. The JSC was concluding its inquiry at the end of October, and for the India Office a potentially disastrous situation loomed: if the evidence went to the JSC unaltered it would bolster the Die Hard case, but if the evidence were withdrawn entirely all of Lancashire would be in uproar. Hoare commissioned Derby to put this situation to Barlow at the MCC, both Hoare and Derby doubtless knowing that Barlow would be immensely reluctant to put the MCC four-square against Hoare's plan for India.[85] Barlow's tenure at the MCC had been marked by a friendly and cooperative approach to the India Office and if that non-adversarial relationship were disrupted then Lancashire might lose valuable access to the India Office, a risk which was certainly not worth taking by challenging Hoare over Indian reforms which he was unlikely to revise. Moreover, given his previous statements about the need for the internal reform of the cotton industry, moreover, Barlow was doubly unlikely to be ready to cut valuable lobbying ties to the Government.[86] And, of course, both Hoare and Derby had been instrumental in setting up the negotiations with Mody, tangible proof (or so it seemed) of the efficacy of a "constructive" engagement with Westminster. In mid-October then, as negotiations ground on in India with Mody and the mill-owners, Barlow huddled not only with Derby, but also with Sir Louis Kershaw at the India Office.[87] Barlow then returned to Manchester, and with the aid of some like-minded colleagues persuaded the MCC to alter its evidence on the grounds that this would greatly ease the ongoing negotiations in India.[88] The new evidence was no longer aimed at bolstering a demand that the Indian Governor-General safeguard British trade, but stated that "Indian Statesmen ought of their own free will to agree to safeguards in the Constitution."[89] On 28 October, five days after

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L/PO/1/51/360–361; Kershaw to Hoare, 26 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/359; Derby to Hoare, 26 July 1933, L/PO/1/51/351; Derby to Kershaw, 3 August 1933, L/PO/1/51/332.

84 Derby to Hoare, 20 August 1933, L/PO/1/51/347; Telegram from Lancashire delegation to Board of Trade, 3 October 1933, L/PO/1/51/318.

85 Croft to Hoare, 4 October 1933, L/PO/1/51/317; Hoare to Derby, 4 October 1933, L/PO/1/51/312–313; Hoare to Croft, 10 October 1933, L/PO/1/51/307.

86 For Streat's description of Barlow's headstrong and "anxious" attitude, see Streat diary, I/325–329, 4 May 1934.

87 Bridge, *Holding India*, p. 128–129; Kershaw note, 19 October 1933, L/PO/1/51/no page number given.

88 Derby to Hoare, 3 November 1933, L/PO/1/51/300; Barlow to Hoare, 6 November 1933, L/PO/1/51/284–285.

89 Revised MCC memorandum, L/PO/1/51/252/282.

Barlow changed the evidence (though this had no impact on the negotiations), the Lancashire delegation came to an agreement with Bombay's mill-owners, having been unable to gain the cooperation of the businessmen in India's other textile manufacturing city, Ahmedabad.[90] This settlement, called the Lees-Mody pact, did not really promise much for Lancashire immediately, but did give some hope for the future. The Bombay mill-owners agreed to lobby for a five per cent reduction in tariffs on British goods once that was deemed fiscally possible. They also promised to support further reductions when feasible. As Chatterji has pointed out, these hopeful signs guaranteed that few in Lancashire would then challenge what Barlow and the MCC had done to the evidence for the Select Committee.[91]

In the spring of 1934, some disgruntled members of the MCC gave Churchill an account of the alteration of the Chamber's evidence, and Churchill pressed for an official investigation of Derby and Hoare for tampering with witnesses in the supposedly impartial work of the JSC. This Committee, on which both Baldwin and MacDonald served, unsurprisingly found that Hoare and Derby had merely offered advice as to the impact of the original MCC evidence on the ongoing trade negotiations and had thus never tried to coerce the MCC to change or withdraw its evidence.[92] This was, of course, patently false. They had not only lobbied outright that the MCC not make their original evidence public for several months, but they had also very subtly alerted Barlow to the potential repercussions of any action except that of presenting altered evidence to the JSC. Indeed, it appears that this latter factor served to guide Barlow's ultimate decisions.

Hoare had been correct in his presumption that not all opinion in Lancashire was irretrievably hostile to the plan for all India federation, but why exactly had the situation developed as he had hoped? Streat, Barlow, Clare Lees, Nathan Laski, had all proven to be fairly pragmatic characters. As Streat told Derby in early 1935, the MCC had little use for the "cotton trade malcontents. they have no concrete suggestions to make, and after all the Government has been trying its best in rather difficult circumstances."[93] The leaders of the MCC, the most notable trade organization in Lancashire, were realists who prized their political clout at Westminster. They understood that despite Lancashire's political weight, the county and its representatives could not simply dictate terms to great political parties, even if the parties themselves seemed not fully aware of this at times. Barlow and Streat especially recognized that politicians would not take seriously claims that none of Lancashire's woes were self-inflicted, and that many in

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[90] Hoare to Derby, 26 October 1933, L/PO/1/51/404–406; Streat diary, I/267–276, 25–28 October 1933.

[91] Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, p. 390.

[92] C. Bridge, "Churchill, Hoare, Derby and the Committee of Privileges, April to June 1934," *Historical Journal* 22/1 (1979), pp. 215–227.

[93] Streat to Derby, 12 January 1935, 920DER[17] 37/5.

Parliament felt that there was no going back on pledges already made to India; thus by early 1933 they had begun to question the worth of implacable opposition to Indian reform, although they had not abandoned the larger quest of bringing down Indian tariffs. Other sorts of solutions besides limiting Indian fiscal autonomy might be worth exploring, like mutual trade agreements, for these too would allow many in the Chamber and elsewhere in the cotton industry to feel that they had dealt with the major obstacle to reviving trade with India. It would then be safer for Barlow and Laski, for example, to push for internal reform and rationalization in Lancashire industry. These moderates had aided Hoare out of frustration as well: any sort of agreement was better than the stalemate of 1930 to 1933. Barlow's efforts to alter the MCC's evidence reflected not only a less adversarial approach to lobbying on Lancashire's part, but also demonstrated the satisfaction felt by those in MCC about a Government which seemed to give tangible benefits in return for cooperation.

Another powerful reason for this flexibility in Lancashire's business elite, without whose cooperation both Hoare and Derby would have found themselves in very uncomfortable political positions, may have been that Streat, Barlow and the others understood that Lancashire businessmen could not fully realize their influence by themselves. They needed at least cordial relations with the India Office, the Board of Trade, the Conservative Party leadership and, especially, Lord Derby – that is, all the channels by which their influence could be brought to bear on the Cabinet. If Lancashire continued to argue against further Indian autonomy, claiming that it alone was responsible for the county's economic problems, that would serve only to irritate many at Westminster who did not buy the argument. Furthermore, unyielding opposition to the White Paper would create strains in the MCC's relationship with the India Office, which had at least appeared to try to get the Viceroy to act in Lancashire's favor and which was still a valuable source for information. Such a strain would likely carry over into the MCC's relations with other parts of the Government, like the board of Trade, and with the Conservative Party. The Chamber, whose members included more traders than manufacturers, could hardly afford such a parting of the ways. And, of course, such a hostile stance would make life very complicated for Derby, who had been Lancashire's patron for so long. When finally forced to choose, with the prospect of a break with Westminster very real, Barlow had decided that he must leave his bridges intact. Throughout 1933 the various actors, Derby, Hoare and the MCC leaders, performed some intricate maneuvers, and each might have felt that he had emerged fairly well from the fray. Good feeling was restored: when trouble loomed for Derby and Hoare in 1934, it was not surprising that Streat and Barlow came to their aid, hiding documents and testifying evasively.[94]

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[94] Streat diary, I/319–329, 27 April and 4 May 1934.

Would the MCC, however, find its efforts reciprocated? The overriding desire of the MCC to resolve their economic difficulties meant in that 1933 they had been willing to publicly abandon any philosophical objections to Indian autonomy, substituting instead a willingness to seek alternative resolutions to the trade dispute in trade negotiations – that was their single independent option. Though they might still lament the Government's policy and the continued decline of their share of the Indian market, they had in truth left themselves pretty much at its mercy. This turn of events in essence solved the Tory leadership's concerns about Lancashire, for it meant that at least one prominent group in the county would not oppose Hoare's Indian scheme, thereby making it impossible for nervous Conservative MPs to vote against the Indian reforms on the grounds that they could not support measures which Lancashire unanimously rejected. Hoare and his colleagues, however, did not seem to grasp this at the time and they pushed on with their efforts to calm opinion throughout Lancashire. Yet even if Hoare had realized that the MCC had effectively neutralized itself, it seems unlikely that he would have relaxed in his drive to mollify the rest of Lancashire. He was an extremely cautious politician after all, one who knew that Lancashire politics were rarely predictable and that it would have been reckless to think that the support of one group in the county would remain consistent and reliable for any length of time.

The India Office, true to form, had spent 1933 trying to shore up moderate Lancashire opinion in variety of ways besides Hoare and Derby's face-to-face efforts. Important Conservatives, including Baldwin, had appeared in Manchester and Liverpool to preach that economic reconciliation with India would come about only through mutual "goodwill," not threats.[95] The India Office continued to monitor the Lancashire press very closely.[96] There were also concerted efforts to make sure that Derby had no reason to abandon his Conservative friends; the best example of this was Hoare and Willingdon's handling of Derby's brother, George Stanley, Governor of Madras in the early 1930s. Willingdon wished to come home on leave at the end of 1933, and although Hailey was the obvious first choice to be Acting Viceroy for this period, both men soon grasped that it might be much wiser, and less politically dangerous, to appoint Stanley.[97] Hoare further decided that, while it might be agreeable to bring Stanley home after his temporary period in New Delhi, thus opening up Madras as a useful piece of patronage, it was even more useful to let Stanley himself decide when he

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95 *Guardian*, 30 June 1933; draft of Butler speech in Liverpool, 24 May 1933, RAB F4/90–96.

96 See the daily India Office press briefings prepared for Butler in the spring of 1933, RAB F73/155–211.

97 Hoare to Willingdon, 20 September to 11 October 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/13a/73–77; Willingdon to Hoare, 23 September 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/13b/179–180.

wished to retire.[98] The manipulation of Indian offices in order to curry favor in Lancashire was not new to Hoare in late 1933; as early as May 1932 he had unsuccessfully pressed Willingdon to name a "Lancashire lad" (probably Douglas Hacking) as the next Governor of Burma.[99] These later efforts, which, like the secret pledges to support the Indian raw cotton market, came at the end of 1933, indicated that despite Hoare's triumphs of the summer there remained a concern for the future course of Lancashire opinion.

Hoare felt he had several interrelated tasks during 1934 and 1935. He needed to continue to soothe Lancashire, especially since the signing of the Lees-Mody pact had not led to an immediate easing of Lancashire's relations with India. It was also necessary to keep Derby happy, for he was after all a reluctant supporter of the White Paper, and, in Hoare's judgment, was still susceptible to concerns about Lancashire's economic future and lobbying by the MCC and others. After meeting with A.D. Campbell, the head of the Indian section of the MCC, Hoare felt that the Chamber's moderates had not yet fully quashed that body's "wild men."[100] Lancashire did in fact have reason to complain in early 1934. The Commerce Member of the Viceroy's Council, Sir Joseph Bhore, had introduced the Lees-Mody agreement for its ratification by the Indian Legislative Assembly, but nothing else had been done, as Indian politicians and businessmen claimed that revenue concerns prohibited any tariff reductions at the moment.[101] To many in Lancashire, this situation brought home the weaknesses of the 1933 accord, especially since reports from India indicated that many nationalist businessmen were unwilling to follow Mody's lead on these matters.[102] It also brought increased pressure on the leadership of the MCC, who had announced in the Chamber's Annual Report, in January 1934, that the events of 1933 had been "of exceptional significance" and that "the future years would see a tightening of the bonds of co-operation."[103] The Anglo-Japanese trade talks slated to open at the start of the year provided an excellent excuse for the resurgence of right-wing, protectionist sentiment in Lancashire. In late January Walter Runciman, President of the Board of Trade, made a hasty two day visit to Manchester, where he promised that the Government would stand firm on its demand for "fair play in all the world markets" and that he and Hoare would press India to extend the preferences worked out in 1932 at Ottawa to British cotton goods.[104] The promise to extend the scope of the Ottawa

[98] Hoare to Willingdon, 17 November 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/889–897; Hoare to Willingdon, 8 December 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/920–925.

[99] E.C. Mieville to Hailey, 4 May 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24a/35–37.

[100] Hoare to Willingdon, 16 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/983–989.

[101] Streat diary, I/297, February 1934.

[102] Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, p. 397.

[103] *Guardian*, 10 January 1934.

[104] *Guardian*, 26 January 1934.

accords had been given first by Bhore to the Lancashire delegation to India in October 1933, but now the National Government made this a public priority.

An even more serious threat to Hoare's strategy in Lancashire came at the end of January 1934, when members of the MCC managed to convene a special meeting where they demanded that the Chamber's leadership, those moderates who preached the need for "constructive" action instead of knee-jerk reaction, should become "interested in the prosperity of Lancashire and the welfare of its inhabitants."[105] Ugly suggestions that the MCC's elders did not represent the "real" Lancashire were not uncommon, and this meeting did not bode well for either Streat and his fellows or Hoare. The resolution proved to be very general, and was not explicitly hostile to the MCC's Board, so the Chamber could pass it without provoking a vote of confidence as well. This did little to reassure anyone at the India Office, for the wording of the resolution did little more than preserve the decencies, which left the intent clear and pointed to the potential for further trouble if the fortunes of Lancashire remained unchanged. In fact, even after the MCC meeting the Lancashire MP for Macclesfield, J.R. Remer, himself attacked the Chamber's leadership as not sufficiently sympathetic to the cotton industry.[106] Remer and several other Lancashire Members soon detached themselves from the Lancashire and Cheshire Parliamentary Committee at Westminster, forming a so-called "ginger group" in protest of the "weak-kneed" approach of the counties' MPs to trade questions.[107] Derby felt compelled to remind his constituents at the end of February 1934 that "[i]f ever there was a trade which needed to pull together it is the cotton trade at the present moment."[108]

Perhaps prompted by this resurgence of feeling in Lancashire, Derby himself was making Hoare's life a bit more difficult. In March he submitted to Hoare a memorandum which called for the inclusion in any Indian legislation of explicit provisions forbidding India to impose tariffs which were not based solely on Indian revenue requirements.[109] Derby and several other members of the JSC, including Austen Chamberlain, had also begun to push Hoare over several other parts of the White Paper, most notably the proposal to allow direct election of Indian representatives to the central federal legislature.[110] Hoare took Derby's memorandum on safeguarding trade very seriously. The India Office took up the cause of a Supplementary Agreement, which would apply the Ottawa provisions to British cotton exports to India, with alacrity. Fortunately, Hoare received a brief reprieve, though he would not have considered it as such. Churchill made

105 *Guardian*, 29 January 1934.

106 *Guardian*, 2 February 1934.

107 *Guardian*, 19 March 1934.

108 *Guardian*, 24 February 1934.

109 "Confidential Memorandum D38", 14 March 1934, RAB F60/55–59.

110 Derby to A. Chamberlain, 3 April 1934, 920DER[17] 37/10.

his charges of witness tampering against both Hoare and Derby in April 1934 and the controversy halted work on India until June. Not only did this give Hoare some breathing room, but it brought Derby once again into close contact with MCC men like Streat and Barlow as they prepared their common defense to the charges.[111] Churchill's attack on Derby also produced other ramifications which helped cement Derby's ties to Hoare's cause. The experience left Derby with great animosity towards Churchill, and towards the Die Hard contingent identified with him, especially those in Manchester who had gathered evidence for these charges and brought their material to Churchill's attention.[112] It was very unlikely now – if it were likely at all – that Derby would gravitate towards the Die Hards who had betrayed and attacked him (however fairly). Besides demonstrations of loyalty like that of the MCC Board, the controversy also brought out support for Derby from many in Lancashire who were not well-disposed to the White Paper, but even more appalled by Churchill's tactics. That such Lancashire MPs like Joseph Nall, who had taken a more rigid stance on India than had Derby, would express their fundamental support for Derby and their belief in his sound character only further isolated the Die Hards in Lancashire and made it easier for the Earl to avoid having to choose between his county and his party.[113] His credibility and judgment remained intact in the public eye, and so did his ability to give a lead to the county on Indian policy. If he decided to oppose the Die Hard view, he could rest assured that he was not flying in the face of majority opinion at home.

Moreover, Derby's opposition to the Die Hards in Lancashire did not trouble him much also because he believed that, since his course had the MCC's Board's approval, he must be working for the best interests of the county. The MCC leadership had turned away from rigid right-wing views, and by mid-1934 the highest priority for Streat and the Chamber was the passage in India of the Supplementary Agreement to the original one at Ottawa and the inclusion in the JSC report on the Indian White Paper of at least some promise, however vague, of future aid for Lancashire's exports. The MCC had again come under pressure from parts of its membership in early July, significantly a week after Churchill had made another dramatic appearance in Manchester.[114] A petition signed by 148 members of the Chamber sparked yet another special meeting of the body, held at the end of July 1934. The petitioners there moved that the Chamber resubmit the MCC's original, much more adversarial, evidence to the Joint Select Committee. However, the MCC leadership, especially Chambers,

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111 See, for example, Derby to Streat, 2 and 4 May 1934, 920DER[17] 37/43.

112 Derby to Hoare, 27 October 1934, 920DER[17] 37/5; Hoare to Stanley, 7 June 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1077–1080; Derby to Sir Joseph Nall, 26 April 1934, 920DER[17] 37/43.

113 Derby to Nall, 26 April 1934, 920DER[17] 37/43; G. Whittaker (Manchester CUA) to Derby, 1 July 1934, 920DER[17] 16/3.

114 Hoare to Stanley, 6 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1091–1093.

were able to avoid a potentially nasty situation by placing an amendment to the resolution before the Chamber members, who had gathered 500 strong for the meeting. The amendment replaced the specific language of the original evidence which had informed the initial resolution, language which specifically sought explicit British supervision of India's fiscal position and constitutional provisions designed to protect British trade with India. Instead, Chambers offered language which emphasized the "paramount" importance of the Government's insertion into any Indian legislation "definite safeguards" which insured Lancashire a "reasonable chance" at competing in the Indian market.[115] Various moderates of the MCC spoke of the need to garner India's goodwill, and warned that any harsh words from Lancashire would only produce further hostility among Indian businessmen and politicians. They also declared that the days when the British Government might dictate the terms of world trade were clearly over, and that Lancashire needed to realize that. Unspoken was the recognition that there was no way in which Hoare would, or could, change the White Paper's emphasis on Indian autonomy, and that recalcitrance by Manchester would only antagonize potential allies at Westminster and Whitehall, not to mention in Bombay and Ahmedabad. The amendment was adopted instead of the Die Hards' resolution nearly unanimously, for several likely reasons. The wording was vague enough to attract those many who were still unhappy with the cotton trade's plight, but who did not wish to be associated with the Die Hards; many in the crowd had found the MCC leadership persuasive in its espousal of less confrontational means of addressing the problem, for this approach had at least yielded something in late 1933 in contrast to earlier, more rigid, stances. Those members of the MCC who did not have a direct interest in the cotton industry had ample reason not to align themselves with the right wing's apparently hopeless cause. And the proposers of the amendment were influential, respected members of the business community whom one would not oppose without very careful thought.

Nevertheless, Streat and the MCC Board, as well as Derby, correctly surmised that they needed more to show for their efforts, lest moderate sentiment in the county began to wane or accuse Derby of neglect. Streat had contacted Eustace Percy in July, a loyal and moderate Tory who sat on the JSC, and the two had drafted new language on safeguarding Lancashire which they felt the Committee and Hoare might allow.[116] This new provision stated simply that the Governor-General in India would be authorized to intervene if British goods faced either "penal" or "discriminatory" tariffs. There would be no examination of India's fiscal situation to see if tariff rises were justified; the provision only applied if British goods were singled out for harsh treatment. Lancashire received no

115 *Guardian*, 24 July 1934; for a report of the meeting, see also RAB F3/3/1.

116 Streat diary, I/330–334, June–July 1934.

preference in the Indian market and no protection from Indian duties aimed at all foreign imports.[117] Hoare, and the Committee's members, had little problem in accepting this definition of safeguards as eminently reasonable: there could be no claim that Lancashire was left completely at India's mercy, while Indian fiscal autonomy remained secure as well. The pragmatists in the MCC knew they could expect nothing more, but at least it was something.

This did not mean that Lancashire stayed silent though, for if Streat and his colleagues knew that they could effect no further changes in the Indian legislation, they did feel that they could still lobby Hoare to push along the Supplementary (Ottawa) Agreement in India, a measure which would further bolster Lancashire's exports and shore up the MCC Board's credibility against Die Hard challenges. Hoare was pleased to take up this cause as well, since he remained greatly concerned that Lancashire would suddenly turn on him. Derby also touted the need for this agreement, which seemed one of the few ways to aid Lancashire without endangering the White Paper. The Earl in fact predicted to all who would listen a terrible backlash in Lancashire if such an agreement were not carried through, in which case he would be back on the horns of a real dilemma.[118]

Hoare remained a dogged supporter of the Supplementary Agreement throughout the late summer and fall of 1934, pressing his case to the Acting Viceroy, Stanley, the Viceroy, Willingdon, his colleagues at the Board of Trade and the Commerce Department of the Government of India.[119] The Indian Secretary, who was worried as well that Derby might suddenly retract his support for Indian reform, worked at another means of improving the way for Lancashire goods in India. Citing a Board of Trade study which demonstrated that the implementation of the Ottawa preferences for other goods entering India from throughout the Empire had not resulted in a corresponding decline in Indian revenue, Hoare urged the Indian Government to lower the tariff on British cotton textiles by five per cent, eliminating part of the surcharge which had been placed on these goods during the economic crisis of 1931.[120] However, Hoare realized that the prospects for achieving such a reduction "without mentioning any counter concession" to India were very slim.[121] Derby's continued prophecies of doom if something was not done for Lancashire, nevertheless, ensured that the Indian Secretary maintained a lively correspondence

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117 See Butler's precis of the JSC's Report of November 1934 at RAB F3/3/57.

118 Hoare to Stanley, 3 August 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1104–1107; Derby to Hoare, 27 October 1934, 920DER[17] 37/5; Derby to Runciman, 27 November 1934, 920DER[17] 37/5.

119 Hoare to Willingdon, 27 September 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1129–1135; Hoare to Indian Commerce Department, 13 December 1934, L/PO/1/51/125–126; Runciman to Hoare, 14 December 1934, L/PO/1/51/113–114.

120 Hoare to Willingdon, 2 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1162–1166; Runciman to Hoare, 14 December 1934, L/PO/1/51/113–114.

121 Hoare to Runciman, 16 November 1934, L/PO/1/51/134.

with New Delhi over the matter. At times, Hoare was compelled to argue to the Viceroy the political necessity of such a move, while nearly simultaneously putting to Derby the Viceregal case that India could not fiscally afford such a move, never mind what the political reaction would be there.[122] At times, Hoare even needed to defend his near-incessant lobbying on Lancashire's behalf to Willingdon, remarking that "I would not do so if I did not really regard the present position as extremely dangerous."[123] As if to lend effect to Hoare's importunings, Derby himself pressed the Lancashire case for both Ottawa preferences and the reduction in the surcharge on the administration in New Delhi.[124]

The results of these negotiations were mixed. In early January 1935, the Government of India announced that it had completed an agreement with the British Board of Trade, under which India pledged to incorporate British cotton goods into those which fell under the Ottawa preference scheme. While this meant that British goods might be favored over other nations', it did not signify an instantaneous and absolute decrease in the tariff rate on Lancashire's products. The Indian Government rejected calls for an immediate reduction in customs duties as they stood.[125] Hoare was "gravely disturbed" that the duties were not adjusted, but in Manchester, Raymond Streat, though acknowledging his disappointment as well, reasoned that "it would have been making a bad [situation] worse if Lancashire had got hot in the collar about it."[126] All was not lost, for the Indian Government had agreed to set up a new Tariff Board to review cotton textile duties overall at the end of 1935.[127] Hoare later warned Willingdon rather pointedly that, given previous boards of this sort and their effectiveness, the Viceroy had best make sure that this new body would be "impartial."[128]

In fact, these fairly minor concessions in the JSC and Hoare's public attempts to lower the Indian tariffs had solidified the India Office's position in Lancashire by the end of 1934. And, although Hoare had been his fretful self throughout and remained so well into 1935, the situation in the cotton county had never really been that grave. The MCC leadership had had no desire to face down Hoare over a lost cause; the small safeguards inserted by the Joint Select Committee in the Indian scheme, as well as the partially encouraging news from New Delhi, were

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[122] Hoare to Willingdon, 29 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1183–1192; Hoare to Derby, 26 November 1934, L/PO/1/51/129; Derby to Hoare, 3 December 1934, 920DER[17] 37/5; Streat diary, I/338–340, 16 November 1934.

[123] Hoare to Willingdon, 5 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1193–1196.

[124] Derby to Willingdon, 8 December 1934 and 16 January 1935, 920DER[17] 37/5.

[125] Willingdon to Hoare, 17 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/412–413.

[126] Hoare to Willingdon, 20 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/414–415; Streat diary, I/355–357, January 1935.

[127] Streat diary, I/353, January 1935.

[128] Hoare to Willingdon, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1253–1260.

more than enough proof for most in the Chamber that their leaders' policy of conciliation, not confrontation, was the successful course. Many MCC members also had no desire to align themselves with the laggards of the cotton industry, nor to jeopardize their future relations with Westminster and the Conservative Party.[129] Furthermore, having recognized that these explicit safeguards were satisfactory to Streat and the MCC, Derby felt free to lobby the Chamber as a whole to accept the JSC's Report which, despite its revisions, had not altered the White Paper's basic premise of an almost completely autonomous Indian federation. Streat in fact helped Derby and Joseph Nall, the Lancashire MP who had also served on the JSC, draft a public letter to the MCC which urged the Chamber to approve the commercial portions of the Committee's Report.[130] Derby also hosted a Lancashire meeting in late November, and prevailed upon Austen Chamberlain to accompany him, both of them stressing the changes which the JSC had made to the White Paper proposals, especially in the area of commercial safeguards, while Derby also emphasized that Lancashire could only succeed in the Indian market through "goodwill," which he called "the biggest asset you could have."[131] The Chamber unanimously approved the commercial provisions of the Report on 30 November. A.D. Campbell, head of the MCC's India section, wrote Derby that the Earl's work over the past eighteen months had converted even those who had been "rather doubtful in months gone by."[132] This result proved that Derby's influence in Lancashire was still very strong, for his approval of these commercial safeguards, and his praise of them, likely served to convince some of the Chamber's membership that the safeguards were real and viable, and also reminded others that a vote against these provisions was a vote against Derby himself. This latter was a risk few in Manchester were willing to take.

Churchill Defeated

Lancashire received a further lesson in the perils of party disloyalty in the first month of 1935. A by-election occurred in the Liverpool constituency of Wavertree, a very safe Tory seat. For some in the Die Hard camp, this seemed a final opportunity to take on the Government, and the party leadership, over

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[129] See Butler's memorandum of his talk with the head of the firm, Steele Bros., 9 January 1935, RAB F4/147.

[130] Streat diary, I/345, 30 November 1934; *Guardian*, 28 November 1934.

[131] *Guardian*, 23 November 1934; Derby to Streat, 21 November 1934, 920DER[17] 37/5; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 24 November 1934, AC 5/1/679; for a similar effort at shoring up Lancashire support with the aid of a local notable, see Butler to Hacking, 7 November 1934, RAB F3/3/53.

[132] Campbell to Derby, 5 December 1934, 920DER[17] 37/5.

India. Randolph Churchill, son of Winston, announced his intention to seek the nomination of the local Conservative Association, having failed in 1933 in his effort to become the Tory candidate at Altrincham in nearby Cheshire.[133] The younger Churchill did not receive the party's nod in Wavertree either, but this time he did not bow out of the contest, declaring instead that he would fight the election as an Independent Conservative. The electioneering brought Winston Churchill north to Liverpool for some stem-winding oratory, and many from the India Defence League either contributed to the campaign or aided in its organization.[134] However, the Wavertree by-election brought the attention of many others in the Tory Party to the threat which the young Churchill's campaign posed. In a party which praised loyalty, and whose members had seen the devastation caused in the Liberal ranks, as well as their own, by a party split, Randolph's actions caused grave concern. The India Office and the party leadership were quick to capitalize on the situation. David Margesson, the party's Chief Whip, publicly warned that, where the Tory ranks fissured, the "Socialist Party gains the victory over the mutilated bodies."[135] Even some in the IDL, most notably Lord Hartington, refused to take part in what they deemed a destructive exercise.[136] From the perspective of the party leadership, the election results of 7 February in Wavertree were in fact a godsend. Randolph managed to split the Conservative vote, which allowed Labour to claim the seat by just over four per cent. At the India Office, Butler found that "Randolph's party splitting efforts" had had a "sobering effect on the party membership and MPs.[137] In Lancashire, where many Tory seats were marginal, the impact of Wavertree was especially great. Was a dispute over one area of party policy worth risking the party's hold on power, and might not the "Socialists"' India policy be even worse?

In February 1935, much to Hoare's dismay, the Indian Assembly resolved against the Supplementary Agreement.[138] However, for all the Indian Secretary's obsessive concern (by spring, 1935 Hoare had been ordered to bed, with Butler left to take charge of the progress of the actual India Bill through the Commons), there was little left to cause him further grief. The India Office had accomplished its goal: it had managed to keep the MCC from outright opposition to Indian reform, and had indeed received the Chamber's approval of the JSC Report. This stance by a respected commercial organization meant that Conservative MPs could not claim that Lancashire demanded rejection of the India Bill without contradicting the

133 There was some relief that Randolph had withdrawn at Altrincham: see Butler to Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, 2 June 1933, RAB F1/15.

134 Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," pp. 180–184.

135 *Times*, 29 January 1935.

136 Butler to Lady Butler, 31 January 1935, RAB D48/1070.

137 Butler to F.E. James, 15 February 1935, RAB F3/2/20.

138 Streat diary, I/353, January 1935.

statements of these solid citizens, and Lord Derby as well. Nor were the MCC's leaders going to reverse course at this late date and against all their inclinations towards a cooperative relationship with the Tories, the India Office and especially Derby. The number of marginal Tory seats, combined with the impact of Wavertree, were excellent insurance for the Government as well. Even as the excitement about the Wavertree by-election built in January 1935, Raymond Streat was off in some new directions. The MCC was concerned over the tariff situation in Burma, as was mentioned earlier, and it was also time to initiate some trade discussions with Egypt.[139] Such were the duties of the practical businessman.

Lancashire's involvement, or at least its attempted intervention, in the shaping of Indian policy in the 1930s was more complicated than it might seem at first glance. It was hardly the case that the region's lobbyists were shut out completely from the policy-making process, reduced to impotent observers as gentlemanly capitalists pursued their agenda unimpeded at Westminster. Such a verdict needs some modification, especially regarding the goals of Lancashire's champions, the fractious nature of the region's business and political communities, and the important role of perception in assessing political power.

In determining the efficacy of Lancashire's attempts to shape policy, historians must be careful to consider just what the region wanted in the first place, and equally the possibility that there were multiple interest groups within Lancashire, each with a somewhat different set of goals. The Cotton Trade League wanted the end of Indian fiscal autonomy and protection for British exports to India, neither of which was remotely possible in the 1930s as the Government attempted to hold onto India by forging alliances with selected nationalists, and with the Indian industrial community as well. However, the failure of the League was not necessarily the failure of Lancashire as a whole in the political arena. In fact, it may be misleading to talk about a single "Lancashire" at all, though that was and remains the convenient political shorthand. Streat, Barlow, and the MCC leadership had a different, and more realistic, set of priorities than did the League, and they felt by 1935 that they had managed to make the best of a bad situation regarding trade with India. They had kept the cotton industry's concerns on the minds of those at Westminster and had pushed textiles towards coverage under the Ottawa principles.[140] If measured by what the MCC had been able to do, given the goals it had set itself, then at least some in Lancashire seem to have maintained a degree of political leverage in the 1930s. A broad sector

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139 Streat diary, I/355–357, 361–362, January 1935 and 21 February 1935.

140 Chatterji argues that this shows Lancashire's success in influencing policy "in operation" rather than "in declaration." However, the MCC may have achieved even more than that, depending on which policy one examines. Indian fiscal autonomy did not disappear, but the inclusion of textiles in the imperial preference scheme was a fundamental change in the original Ottawa policy of 1932. See Chatterji, *Trade, Tariffs and Empire*, 27.

within industrial Britain may not have been able to dictate policy at Westminster at will, but that did not mean that the varied interest groups within that sector were without any influence at all. However, it is important to remember that such influence as Lancashire had in the 1930s derived as much from contingency as it did from the region's real political weight.

How were these groups able to affect policy, especially as they could not depend solely on the sheer weight of their numbers within the Tory ranks? If this investigation of Lancashire's political strength has highlighted the need to see the region as something less than a unified whole possessing one grand strategy, it has also demonstrated the necessity of viewing political power and influence as relational and often dependent on perception. Even if all its MP's had opposed Hoare's Indian plan, Lancashire would not have been able to derail the legislation; the number of committed Die Hards like Page Croft and Churchill was not so great either that a Lancashire-Die Hard combination would have killed the India Bill. That was not what concerned Hoare and the Cabinet however; rather, they were acutely aware of Lancashire's psychological and symbolic significance within the Tory ranks, and thus of the possibility that the region's reluctance to go along with the Indian reforms would cause wavering Conservatives to desert the government's line. In a fluid political situation, where many Tories seemed apprehensive, or at least quite cautious, about British India's future – and where the Cabinet was hyper-vigilant about any threat real or perceived to its Indian plans – Lancashire assumed almost a disproportionate importance in the eyes of Hoare and the Conservative front-bench. It is possible to argue, of course, that Hoare and his colleagues need not have feared as much as they did from Lancashire, or from their party as a whole. The MCC was always more amenable to the Indian scheme than Hoare could ever have imagined, and Derby's determination to prevent intra-party strife was always quite strong. The Tory party itself, both in Westminster and in the country, was also very averse to doing anything that might cause the downfall of the Government. Moreover, it has been asserted that most Lancashire Tory MP's, especially those in marginal seats, would never have aligned themselves with the Die Hards, being unable to risk or afford such an affiliation in their special circumstances.[141] That Hoare's fears may have been unfounded – and he could at times appear almost paranoid about the votes on India – did not make them any less real. As long as the Indian Secretary, and the Die Hards too, remained convinced that Lancashire's spokesmen might come out against the Indian reforms, with fatal consequences for these measures, then Lancashire still exercised some sway in the corridors of power. The journeys north of so many Conservative notables, grimly determined to make their cases on India, were ample testament to that.

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141 Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," p. 156; McEwen, "Unionist and Conservative Members of Parliament," pp. 439–40.

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Chapter 6
"The Men Who Know": Authority, Policy and the Future of the Empire in the Conservative Party

As British Conservatives debated the Indian reform proposals in the early 1930s, they found themselves arguing not only over the viability and efficacy of certain schemes, but also over the claims of various groups within Britain to speak authoritatively about Indian affairs. In parallel with the efforts of the colonial administration in New Delhi to determine who actually spoke for India, then, there emerged a metropolitan competition over who ought to describe India to the British public. Anti-reformers mounted a serious challenge to Hoare and his colleagues in the India Office and the party leadership, arguing that the latter's failure to understand Indian society disqualified them from any position of imperial stewardship. The controversy over who had the authority to prescribe Indian policy, conducted with great energy and not infrequent animosity, was in fact ultimately about more than just contesting claims to a specific colonial knowledge. This was a struggle over the fundamental meaning and shape of the empire, its purpose and its future, and it highlighted a sort of generational split among those charged with making imperial decisions. Furthermore, the emphasis both sides placed on the lessons derived from Irish events a decade or so earlier indicated the continued influence Ireland had over colonial strategy, as well as the depths of the real bitterness and emotion that remained among Conservatives over the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty. In the end, this contest over knowledge and authority, by its very existence, also revealed the seriousness with which the entire membership of the Tory party approached the question of India's future, as such an argument necessarily supposed a certain level of imperial interest among its hearers and judges. And as its actions throughout 1933 and 1934 indicated, the Conservative leadership was hardly overconfident of its prospects in such a debate. Indeed, the existence of such contentious feeling about the future of the empire helps explain why, ultimately, Baldwin, Hoare and other senior Tories chose to frame the passage of Indian reform to the party not simply as a question of policy, but as a referendum on the party leadership itself.[1]

Conservative opponents of the federal plan organized their arguments and their resistance along fairly familiar lines, relying not simply on appeals to imperial greatness, but on conceptions of British colonial exceptionalism. Governing India was a moral undertaking, a religious mission even, and thus a demonstration

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[1] See Stewart, *Burying Caesar,* esp. p. 174.

of the benevolence and high purpose that marked British imperialism out from other European nations' endeavors. For some of the Die Hards, like Henry Page Croft, such language seems to have represented accurately his sense of the empire, while for others, like Churchill notably, claims of duty, honor and responsibility likely served to cloak a more geopolitical and security-minded assessment of colonialism. To the former, any transfer of responsibility for the Indian "masses" to the nationalists meant, in the words of one, the desecration of "the sacrifices of our ancestors" who had "pour[ed] out their blood and their treasure to perform the miracle of the Pax Britannia in India."[2] Another opponent of Indian reforms argued that supporters of these measures had ceased to believe in the "moral duty" of an empire that had "shown itself to be the greatest force of progress in the world next to the Christian Church."[3] Opponents of the reforms congregated in the Indian Defence League and pledged "to see the British mission in India faithfully discharged."[4] These were vivid religious sentiments, then, cloaked to various degrees in the rhetoric of expiation and sacrifice.

Much of the anti-reform case, of course, drew on certain ideas about Indian behavior that were driving the reform scheme, though neither Hoare nor his supporters could make such a cynical case openly and have any hope of eventual success in India. Reginald Craddock, ex-ICS himself, argued in Parliament that democracy was not possible in "a country with so many warring races and jarring creeds" and where people had "no opinions on any question outside their immediate vicinity."[5] They argued that Britain could not abandon the vast Indian masses who remained locked into pre-modern modes of thinking and were thus virtually children: a "hardy, patient, but inarticulate folk" in the words of the Conservative M.P., Patrick Donner.[6] Opponents of the reform proposals brandished this image of India, a land of simple, illiterate and child-like peasants – the "humble, silent millions," as Lord Curzon had put it – in their argument for continuing the British guardianship, or quasi-parental oversight, of India.[7] Die Hards like Page Croft quoted approvingly in the House of Commons from the work of both Mayo and Patricia Kendall, two Americans who had toured India and concluded that Indians were so trapped in their backward villages that only Britain could ensure the advancement of education, technology and sanitation in

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2 Speech by Page Croft, *ibid.*, p. 225; see also Studdert-Kennedy, "The Christian Imperialism of the Die-Hard Defenders of the Raj, 1926–35."

3 Speech by Viscount Wolmer *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (Parl. Deb.)*, 5th series, vol. 283, p. 134 (22 Nov. 1933).

4 India Defence League leaflet, 1933, copy at Mss. Eur. e.237/5.

5 *Parl. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 276, 741–742 (22 March 1933).

6 *Parl. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 283, p. 154 (22 Nov. 1933).

7 Nayana Goradia, *Lord Curzon: The Last of the British Moghuls* (Delhi, 1993), p. 177.

much of India.[8] Moreover, Croft, Churchill and their fellow Die Hards argued that the inherent provincialism and localism of the average Indian proved that no unified conception of "India" even existed – thus making any case for an autonomous Indian central government completely moot. In their view, only Britain had been able to prevent the subcontinent's descent into a many-sided civil war.[9]

Ideas about an entrenched caste system, and about the Hindu orientation of the nationalist party generally, combined with this notion of an unsophisticated Indian peasantry to intensify the criticism further. Given the aims and practices of the Congress, the creation of a "Hindu despotism" would be the only result.[10] According to the India Defence League, political reform could only end up placing "the dumb and helpless millions of India under the heel of their hereditary oppressors."[11] The IDL's argument even invoked the Nazis in predicting the effect of such religious division in India: "We have seen the results of similar conditions in Germany. The results will be far worse in India."[12] Without British guidance, the Die Hards claimed, India would slip back into a "barbarism" in which the lower castes and Untouchables would suffer under the rule of a rapacious Brahmin elite.[13] A clergyman opposed to the reforms argued that they would leave India in the hands of a corrupt "priestly" caste.[14] The editor of the right-wing *Morning Post* saw a capitulation to the "timorous Hindoo."[15] Craddock, searching for some sort of ultimate metaphor, condemned Brahmins as "Pharisees," and noted acerbically that "[w]e have the highest possible authority for not trusting the Pharisees."[16] At Manchester Free Trade Hall in 1933, Lord Lloyd combined all of these elements into a sweeping condemnation of the reforms, declaring that they would leave "several hundreds of millions of people … to be handed over to the tender mercies of the Brahmin oligarchy, of Bombay monopolists, of Ahmedabad mill-owners, of usurers more exacting than Shylock, and priests more zealous than Torquemada."[17] The emphasis on the Hindu domination of the Congress underpinned yet another

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8 See Page Croft speech in *Parl. Deb.*, cited above; Kendall, *Come with me to India!*, p. 261.

9 See, for example, Churchill's Albert Hall speech, 18 March 1931, in *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches, 1897–1963 (SWC)*, ed. R.R. James (London, 1974), volume V, pp. 5003–5009.

10 Winston Churchill speech to Indian Empire Society, 12 Dec. 1930 in *Winston Churchill: India: Speeches and an Introduction* (London, 1931), pp. 40–47.

11 India Defence League pamphlet: "Pure Folly" (The White Paper Proposals for India), July 1933.

12 Indian Defence League leaflet, 1933, Mss Eur. e.237/5.

13 See Churchill, *India: Speeches and an Introduction*, pp. 30–35, 122–126.

14 Quoted in Studdert-Kennedy, *Providence & the Raj*, p. 211.

15 H.A. Gwynne to S. Baldwin, 24 Nov. 1930, SB 104/71–74.

16 *Parl. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 283. p. 747 (22 March 1933).

17 *Guardian*, 13 May 1933.

aspect of the Die Hards' criticism: the claim that without the benevolent presence of the British, India would devolve into communal violence and the repression of Muslims, Sikhs and other non-Hindus. Lloyd warned that "we know the strength of religious and communal feeling in India and the danger to the general security which it constantly threatens."[18] Churchill thundered that even earlier Indian reforms had not brought "peace between jarring races and rival religions … they have only wakened old passions which were slumbering under the Pax Britannica."[19] The *Indian Empire Review*, the house organ of the Die Hards, consistently predicted that without British protection Muslims would disappear from India entirely.[20] In a grandiose effort to show that Indian autonomy was a threat to racial hierarchy, industry, national security and even the City, Churchill told the nascent Indian Empire Society in December 1930 that Congress rule would mean a new and threatening day, "when white people will be in India only upon sufferance, when debts and obligations of all kinds will be repudiated and when an army of white janissaries, officered if necessary from Germany, will be hired to secure the armed ascendancy of the Hindu."[21]

To bolster their case that India could not, and should not, receive anything like full responsible government for the foreseeable future, opponents of the federal plan heralded the support they received from many Britons who had served the Raj. The India Defence League included nearly sixty MPs, several ex-Governors of Indian Provinces and many with ties to the Indian administration and army.[22] Reginald Craddock, for example, had been Governor of the United Provinces. The Die Hards also garnered support from some still employed in India as well. General Phillip Chetwode, the Commander-in-Chief of British forces in India, and a member of the Viceroy's Council, told Lord Lloyd in mid-1932 that, although his position on the Council prevented him from speaking publicly, he was very opposed to the reforms and convinced that India was not yet ready for a "Western" style government.[23] The support of this community had allowed the Die Hards, even before the coming of the National Government, to criticize the "extraordinary lack of knowledge with regard to Indian affairs" in MacDonald's Cabinet, and enabled them to continue attacks in a similar vein even after 1931.[24] The presence of these

[18] Lord Lloyd speech of 4 July 1933, reprinted as 'The Problem of Constitutional Reform in India,' *International Affairs* 12/5 (September 1933), pp. 593–610.

[19] Quoted in R.A. Butler, *The Art of the Possible: The Memoirs of Lord Butler* (London, 1971), p. 47.

[20] See Studdert-Kennedy, 'Christian Imperialism,' p. 359.

[21] *SWC*, vol. V., pp. 4934–4938 (11 December 1930).

[22] Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," pp. 142–143; IDL memorandum, May 1933, CHAR 2/197/73–74.

[23] Chetwode to Lloyd, 17 June 1932, Churchill Archives Lloyd Papers, GLLD 11/1.

[24] Page Croft quoted in *Bournemouth Echo*, 12 May 1931.

ex-Indian civil servants in the opposition ranks also, however, provided pro-reform politicians with some ammunition of their own. Irwin argued that "anyone whose touch with India is five or six years old is really out of date as regards appreciation of the psychological side of it, which is really rather big."[25] Craddock, the former Governor, struck Leo Amery as "an old fossil" and "intolerably dreary."[26]

The affinity of those who had retired or returned from Indian service for the Die Hard case was in some ways understandable. Behind all of the anti-federation rhetoric, that which was heartfelt and that which was purely pragmatic, lay a particular understanding of the British role in India: that of trustee or guardian, charged less with nurturing Indian political development than with protecting Indians from themselves.[27] This sentiment was likely that which had informed the experience of many of these old "India hands," especially when they began their careers in the late nineteenth century. For those whose entire careers had been spent in India, such criticism from a short-serving political appointee like Irwin must indeed have stung. Furthermore, the pro-reformers' argument that the British mission in India was not to watch over Indians, but to guide them towards political responsibility seemed an almost explicit rebuke of those who had formerly served the Raj.

The scale and intensity of the response of Hoare and Baldwin, and their colleagues and advisers, to the Die Hard challenge indicated that these senior Tories saw this opposition as formidable, and its message potentially resonant among rank-and-file Conservatives. Those who favored the federal scheme for India addressed themselves not only to rejecting specific criticisms of the reforms by Churchill and others, but also to the larger project of discrediting the Die Hards' vision of Britain's imperial purpose and even their claims to speak about India with some authority. All of these tasks became the responsibility of an entirely new, and supposedly independent, lobbying vehicle.

Immediately after the publication of the White Paper in March 1933, senior Conservatives and India Office officials set about forming an organization to rival the right-wing Indian Empire Society and India Defence League. If the Die Hards could trot out ex-ICS men to criticize the White Paper, then Hoare could round up some other old India hands to defend the proposals. The result was the Union of Britain and India, led by Sir John Thompson, a former Indian civil servant and judge.[28] Although the UBI proclaimed that it was not affiliated with any political

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25 Irwin to Benn, 10 October 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6.

26 Amery diary, II/291 (27 March 1933).

27 Die Hard speeches usually contained at least one reference to Britain's role as Indian "trustee." See the speeches offered in the Commons on 22 November 1933 (*Parl. Deb*, 5th series, vol. 283, pp. 134–195.)

28 Davidson to Butler, 13 March 1933, RAB F73/32; Davidson to C. Davis, 26 April 1933, JCCD 201.

party, that was not exactly the case.[29] The India Office and Conservative Central Office had combined to bring this group into existence, and, even after they had succeeded in this first task, officials at both devoted a great deal of time to assisting the new organization.[30] J.C.C. Davidson's primary responsibility was to insure the financial viability of the UBI, which he did by trading on his old connections from his days as the Conservative Party Chairman. He soon located some pro-reform businessmen, in industry and in the City, and during 1934 and 1935 served as a conduit between the UBI and its benefactors, who wished to remain anonymous.[31] The precise source of the UBI's funds has remained an open question among historians, although recent scholarship has suggested that the money may in fact have come from the Conservative Party itself.[32] Davidson's private papers indicate that he had coordinated UBI financing with Sir Thomas Catto of the merchant bankers, Morgan Grenfell, a prominent party supporter and advocate of political reform in India.[33] The use of these intermediaries may mean that the UBI was drawing upon Conservative funds, especially since money received by Davidson was deposited in his account before he then wrote a separate check to the UBI. These transactions might also suggest that Catto himself, or a group in the City, was responsible for backing the organization. In any event, the elaborate process by which the UBI was sustained financially is an indication that this supposedly impartial organization wished to keep the provenance of its funds well hidden, very likely because this money came from sources who were at least compromisingly close to official Conservative circles.

R.A. Butler was even more intimately involved in the running of the UBI than Davidson. As Hoare's deputy in the India Office, he had helped gather together and encourage the ex-ICS dignitaries who would run the organization. With Thompson's help, Butler had been able to attract to the UBI's head Viscount Goschen, the former Governor of Madras, and Sir Alfred Watson, the retired editor of the *Indian Statesman*, a paper in which Reading had a financial interest, as well as other less well-known figures who nonetheless had significant Indian experience, which was the UBI's key selling-point after all. On the commercial side, the UBI managed to attract Edward Benthall, the Calcutta-based businessman, who could speak with

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29 UBI pamphlet #2, RAB F74/46.

30 Butler to Stewart, March 1933, RAB F73/10–15; Davidson to Butler, 13 March 1933, RAB F73/32.

31 Davidson to Goschen, 27 December 1933, JCCD 201; Davidson to Goschen, 22 March 1934, JCCD 206; Villiers to Davidson, 11 April 1935, JCCD 220; Villiers to Davidson, 22 May 1935, JCCD 220.

32 Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," p. 161.

33 Goschen to Davidson, 15 October 1935, JCCD 220; Davidson to Catto, 16 October 1935, JCCD 220; Davidson note, 27 November 1935, JCCD 220. For Catto's view of the Indian reforms, see Catto to Reading, 28 December 1934, Mss. Eur. f.118/9/74.

authority of support for the White Paper among Britons in India.[34] From mid-1933 through 1935, Butler was, for all intents, the strategic director of the UBI. He persuaded Harold Macmillan to use the family publishing house to produce the first UBI pamphlets and organized the distribution of this material to local associations with the party's Central Office staff.[35] Butler and his staff at the India Office, especially H.A. Rumbold, provided the UBI with information on India, coordinated the organization's responses to Die Hard attacks, and even vetted UBI publications and articles by UBI members published in the regular press.[36] Acting in concert with Butler, the Conservative Central Office made equally good use of the UBI, inviting the group's representatives to address local constituency associations and advertising, through the Conservative Agents' Journal, the UBI's availability to discuss the "truth about the Government's proposals" regarding India.[37]

The first task of the pro-reformers was to address the arguments raised by the Die Hards against giving anything more than provincial autonomy to India. The Indian Empire Society had attacked the reforms in the harshest terms:

> This would constitute the greatest debacle in British History. We should have yielded an Imperial sovereignty to the agitation of a few thousand Europeanised natives, and to the meddling and peddling theorising of the Lionel Curtis School of political doctrinaires.[38]

To answer these challenges, the UBI, the India Office and the party leadership argued for a different understanding of the British mission in India, not as a conservator of Indian interests, but as a sort of regent and instructor with the moral responsibility to promote Indian growth. This conception, which of course cloaked the true rationale behind the federal plan, implied that, contrary to Die Hard opinion, Indians were capable of maturing. Thus, pro-reform groups defended Hoare's proposals as hardly revolutionary, but instead part of

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34 Benthall to Tweedy, 29 June 1933, ECB III/1/10; Tweedy to Benthall, 12 October 1933 and Benthall to Tweedy, 18 October 1933, both at ECB IV/3/80.

35 Macmillan to Butler, 11 May 1933, RAB F73/38; Butler to Macmillan, 13 May 1933, RAB F73/39; RAB to Gower, 13 May 1933, RAB F73/40.

36 Rumbold to Tweedy, 26 July 1933, RAB F73/274; Rumbold to Tweedy, 29 September 1933, RAB F74/29; Hoare to Brabourne, 20 December 1933, TP VII/4/12; Draft of article by Mark Patrick, MP, 26 December 1933, RAB F74/56–67; UBI memorandum, 9 January 1934, Thompson Papers, Mss. Eur. f.137/51/1–2; Tweedy to Morley, 20 January 1934, RAB F74/88; Tweedy to Morley, 18 September 1934, RAB F74/143; Tweedy to Butler, 23 February 1935, RAB F74/171–174.

37 Conservative Agents' Journal, June 1933, pp. 179–180, CPA (microfilm); Tweedy memorandum: "Relations with Central Office," 23 January 1934, Mss. Eur. f.137/51/76; Tweedy memorandum, 15 February 1934, Mss. Eur. f.137/51/86–91.

38 F.V. Fisher, "The Threatened Indian Chaos," IES pamphlet, undated, GLLD 17/17.

the natural evolution of Indian society under British tutelage, the capstone of "a policy pursued for three-quarters of a century."[39] Sir Frederick Sykes, ex-Governor of Bombay and an ally of Hoare, urged a gathering of Tory backbenchers that "we cannot go back but must go forward."[40] To renege on promises made to India, especially by Montagu, would be to jeopardize strong Indian bonds of sentiment with Britain and thus endanger British efforts to retain India as an imperial treasure.[41] It was, therefore, the Die Hards whose actions verged on the immoral, for blocking India's political development ran against the fact that Britain had, in Hoare's words, "led India to believe in the continuous bestowal of new instalments of constitutional progress."[42] The UBI employed this argument especially to defend Hoare's plan to transfer provincial "law and order" to responsible Indian administrators.[43] As Lord Stonehaven, the Conservative Party Chairman, noted to Baldwin early in the campaign, the real need was to stress "the danger of disaffecting the legitimate hopes which *we* have raised in the minds of loyal and educated Indians."[44] Another UBI publication stressed that "a rejection of the White Paper proposals ... would have the effect of stimulating the terrorist movement [in India] to increased activity."[45] Butler, writing to a group of young Conservatives, made it clear, however, that such delegation of power to Indians did not mean an abdication of British control, but rather a recognition of the "virtual impossibility of mastering the necessary detail" needed to retain India without indigenous assistance.[46] As such, the Indian reforms were "not intended to break up an Empire but to cement one."[47]

As part of emphasizing that Hoare's Indian scheme would meet India's legitimate demands and secure the continuation of British control on the subcontinent, the pro-reform forces also took pains to delineate the safeguards that would accompany any devolution of power in India. The UBI's first leaflet had declared that the organization would insist on "the maintenance of adequate safeguards which alone will make such an advance practicable and possible."[48]

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39 UBI pamphlets #1 and #2, RAB F74/41–46; Londonderry to Hoare, 17 October 1934, RAB F3/3/49–50.

40 1922 Committee Minute-book, vol. 2, p. 202, 26 February 1934. See also Sykes's letter to the *Times* echoing this sentiment, 6 November 1934.

41 UBI Pamphlet: "Indian Reforms of 1921. Failure or Success?", 1933, RAB F3/4/71.

42 *Parl. Deb.* 5th series, vol. 276, 698 (27 March 1933). See also Thompson's speech to the House India Committee, 12 December 1932, JCCD 198.

43 UBI Pamphlet #3, RAB F74/47.

44 Stonehaven to Baldwin, 14 May 1933, SB 106/75–77.

45 UBI pamphlet: "Terrorism in India. The Menace and the Remedy," 1933, RAB F3/4/72.

46 Butler to Coningsby Club, November 1933, RAB F3/1/61.

47 Butler speech in Cambridge, 28 January 1935, RAB F4/150.

48 UBI leaflet, 19 May 1933, RAB F73/248.

There was much emphasis that the safeguards included in the White Paper plan would prevent India from going the way of Ireland.[49] Both in publications and in replies to concerned constituents, Hoare and his allies reiterated, in almost a mantra, the details and the worthiness of these safeguards. These included the special powers designated under the White Paper to the Viceroy, like the preservation of Indian credit and the prevention of commercial discrimination.[50] Thompson, as head of the UBI, circulated a letter to all local Conservative associations underlining the "vital," and stabilizing role which the Indian princes would play in the new Indian central government. Indeed, in some cases the India Office spent what must have been a great deal of time in answering the queries of individuals from local Tory associations. This effort seems yet another indication of the party leadership's conviction that the party at large was very nervous of Indian reform, and of the leadership's corresponding determination to get every vote in favor of reform that it could. In one instance, the India Office, in the person of Butler, felt compelled to respond, through the UBI, to a veteran of the Indian Medical Service who had written *The Lancet* that the White Paper would jeopardize all IMS pensions.[51] Butler kept up a detailed correspondence in mid-1933 with L.D. Gosling, a prominent Tory in his own Saffron Walden constituency, and eventually seemed to satisfy him on the Indian safeguards, a gratifying victory for Butler, who saw Gosling as a "very important" and influential constituent.[52] The India Office stayed busy advising both the Conservative Central Office and the local MP, Waldron Smithers, on how to respond to the anti-White Paper criticisms being publicized by an ex-Indian civil servant who lived in Smithers's Kent constituency.[53] Central Office also relied on India Office information in replying to concerns over "law and order" in India which were raised by the rather difficult Bath Conservative Association.[54]

When Churchill and his allies scoffed at the safeguards put forward, declaring that Indians remained unfit for self-government on a large scale, Hoare and his allies had two standard responses. They continued to hold that the Montagu-

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49 Sir Alfred Watson, "Plain Facts about the Indian Scheme," May 1933, CPA (microfilm) 1933/10.

50 *Ibid.*; Conservative Agents' Journal, June 1933, pp. 193–195, CPA (microfilm); Conservative Part pamphlet: "Indian Constitutional Reform: Questions and Answers," May 1933, CPA (microfilm) 1933/11.

51 Rumbold to Tweedy, 13 October 1933, RAB F3/2/49–59.

52 Butler to Gosling, 28 April 1933, RAB F3/1/83–86; Butler to Gosling, 17 July 1933, RAB F3/1/89; Gosling to Butler, 24 July 1933, RAB F3/1/90.

53 See India Office records at L/PO/5/17/77–109.

54 A.D. McClay (Conservative Central Office) to Rumbold, 15 August 1933, RAB F74/1; Rumbold to F.H.A. Carter, 4 September 1933, RAB F74/12; Rumbold to McClay, 5 September 1933, RAB F74/19.

Chelmsford reforms, which introduced dyarchy in the provinces, had been a great success, attracting "responsible" Indians to government, and even bringing some Congress members into local administrations, thus proving that many Indians did not really share that party's ultimate goal.[55] They also sturdily maintained that there was "little probability of Congress being in a majority in the Provinces" and that, even in the worst case scenario, "at its maximum Congress cannot obtain more than 34 per cent of the seats at the Centre."[56] Here, their arguments more closely resembled the real thinking behind the reform policy. Hoare, perhaps to his later regret, promised that it was "almost impossible, short of a landslide, for the extremists to get control of the federal center."[57] This was not an argument, however, given the tactics behind this measure, that could function as the most prominent piece of the reformers' case.

The UBI and the Tory organization also lobbed charges calculated to discredit personally their Die Hard opponents. The lack of Indian experience among the Die Hard leadership was hammered home. Churchill hadn't been in India since the end of the last century and Page Croft had never set foot there.[58] Furthermore, Churchill's failure to oppose the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms left him open to charges of political double-dealing.[59] Lloyd, Governor of Bombay in the early 1920s, had later proved an embarrassment in Egypt, while another anti-reform agitator, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, was notorious for his defense of the odious General Dyer after the 1919 massacre at Amritsar. The IDL was portrayed as a collection of curious relics, ex-colonial administrators and soldiers whose recollections of India (if they had any) were stuck in the nineteenth century, and who ranted, veritable Colonel Blimps, from their deckchairs in Bournemouth and Eastbourne.[60] The UBI, on the other hand, represented:

> Those who have governed India SINCE the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms – in other words, since partial self-government was given its first real trial in India ... TRUST THEM.[61]

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55 UBI pamphlet: "Indian Reforms of 1921: Success or Failure," 1933, RAB F3/4/71.

56 Conservative Agents' Journal, June 1933, p. 195, CPA (microfilm).

57 *Parl. Deb.* 5th series, vol. 276, 706 (27 March 1933).

58 Willingdon to Baldwin, 19 June 1933, SB 106/97–98.

59 See undated memorandum by Davidson noting the importance of a "close analysis and criticism of Winston's past and present attitude towards India" JCCD 201.

60 This Colonel Blimp image appeared most notably in the scathing political cartoons produced in the 1930s by Low for the *Evening Standard*; see also, Stewart, "Churchill and the Conservative Party," p. 159.

61 UBI pamphlet, untitled, 1933, RAB F74/38. See also the UBI's second pamphlet of 1933: "Its Principles and Aims" (RAB F74/46).

Also marshaled in prompt defense of the White Paper were the Viceroy and the Provincial Governors in India, as well as many British businessmen in India.[62] Hoare wished these Indian administrators to personally and publicly state their earlier conclusion that Indian moderates were willing to work the reforms, and that Congress's rhetoric belied the actual desire of many within that party to participate in Indian federal government.[63] Chief among them was Hailey, seen by Hoare as someone who was "regarded by the Conservatives as a very sound Provincial Governor" and who had "a wonderful way of explaining details to ignorant people."[64] For his part, Hailey wryly noted his own awkward task of championing reform against the opposition of former, and less flexible, colleagues from the Indian Civil Service: "I feel indeed when I meet them that I resemble somewhat a young lady who has lost her virtue and who has returned to face the old family circle."[65] The UBI, in another instance, acted quickly to get a response from Edward Benthall to a Die Hard claim that the British Chambers of Commerce in India opposed parts of the White Paper dealing with the Provincial police; Benthall's rebuttal, the judgment of a "man on the spot," was soon forthcoming.[66] Baldwin himself declared that he would "consult and trust the men on the spot," keeping with the "old Conservative doctrine with regard to anything which takes place overseas."[67] In the House of Lords, Irwin and Reading combined to rebut Lloyd's charge that Indian terrorism was on the increase, and chided him for causing worry to those in Britain whose loved ones were serving in India.[68] Other Cabinet Ministers and high-placed officials similarly denounced the Die Hards as dinosaurs.[69] Both the speeches and the various pronouncements of the UBI were given prominent attention in the national press, as connections established earlier in 1933 bore fruit.

Despite this concentrated and coordinated effort to influence Tory opinion in favor of the Indian federal plan, Hoare and his advisers never felt fully confident

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62 Baldwin speech, 30 April 1933, printed in *Times*, 1 May 1933. See also Hoare to Baldwin, 24 June 1933, SB 106/118–120; Hoare to Willingdon, 11 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/399.

63 Hoare to Willingdon, 21 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/403; Hoare to Willingdon, 3 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1207–1212; Hoare to Willingdon, 11 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/408; Brabourne to Hoare, 21 January 1935, TP VII/4/62.

64 Hoare to Willingdon, 10 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/629–632; Hoare telegram to Willingdon, 12 March 1933, copy in Hailey Papers, Mss. Eur. e.220/25c/382.

65 Hailey to M. Keane, 25 March 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/25c/414–416.

66 Tweedy to Benthall, 12 October 1933, ECB IV/3/80; Benthall to Tweedy, 18 October 1933, ECB IV/3/80.

67 Quoted in the *Guardian*, 29 June 1933.

68 *Guardian*, 27 July 1933.

69 These included Hailsham, Hacking, Duff Cooper, Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain and Sir Kingsley Wood in the summer of 1933 alone.

that they had allayed the fears of many among the party faithful.[70] Just before the publication of the White Paper in early 1933, a deputation from the Conservative Central Council, including Stonehaven, the Chairman, and Topping, the Chief Agent, advised Baldwin that the party at large had a "feeling of great uncertainty ... about the future of India."[71] In April 1933 Hoare himself told the Viceroy that among the Tory MPs: "there are not thirty who are keen to go on with the [India] Bill, ... the great mass is very lukewarm and ... a very strong minority is actively hostile."[72] One year later, Hoare was still concerned about the support his reforms might garner, as when he reminded those in New Delhi that his domestic difficulties were "almost insurmountable and they will be made quite insurmountable if we get nothing but negative criticism and no helpful suggestions from India."[73]

Part of the hesitancy Hoare saw in the party ranks over Indian policy likely stemmed from the fact that the Die Hards had not wilted under sustained pressure, but had in fact mounted something of a counter-attack. Churchill countered arguments about the Die Hards' lack of recent experience in India by accusing Hoare of stocking the highest administrative ranks of the Raj with confirmed supporters of Indian political change who would "give a modern and welcome reception to these sort of proposals."[74] He went on to criticize the ex-Viceroys and former provincial Governors who stood with Hoare as well, identifying them as more bound by patronage than by experience, labeling them "great personages who have sailed over the surface of India affairs … these exalted officials bound by their duty to the Government of the day."[75] In 1933 Churchill and Craddock both castigated Hoare's reliance on Indians like Sapru who were working "by craft and by the hoodwinking of the British nation, to attain those powers at which the Congress is aiming by other methods."[76] Moreover, the Die Hards were themselves able to produce Britons based in India who opposed the reform scheme, causing Hoare no end of trouble when, for example, the *Morning Post* published complaints from Europeans in Bengal that the Government was selling out their interests.[77] The India Defence League actively recruited business

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70 Hoare to Stanley, 22 May 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1068–1069.

71 National Union Executive Committee memorandum, 15 March 1933, CPA (microfilm).

72 Hoare to Willingdon, 20 April 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1043–1046.

73 Hoare to Stanley, 1 June 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1070–1076; Hoare to Stanley, 19 July 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1098–1100; for Hoare's sense that even his "big majorities" in early 1935 were "no guarantee of the position," see Hoare to Willingdon, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1253–1260.

74 *Parl. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 276, p. 1045 (29 March 1933).

75 Churchill broadcast speech, 30 January 1935, *SWC*, vol. V, pp. 5467–5468.

76 For speeches by both in the Commons, see *Parl. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 276, 749, pp. 1045–1050 (27–29 March 1933).

77 Hoare to Willingdon, 30 September 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/12a/173–174.

types specifically to refute the views of Englishmen like Benthall who supported Hoare.[78] Public criticism of the political reforms also came from groups in India sympathetic to the Die Hard side, though not formally affiliated with them, like those representing the Indian police and the "domiciled European" community in India.[79] Periodic reports of discontent among the Indian Civil Service in the United Provinces and Bengal demanded the India Office's attention as well.[80] Although the India Defence League often found itself short of funds, it was, through the *Morning Post* and its correspondent in India, Madhava Rao, able to organize at least two deputations that traveled to India in order to influence some Indian princes against approving the federal plan.[81] Events in India certainly did not help Hoare's cause either, especially the Congress triumph in the 1934 elections to the Legislative Assembly. These results provided, in Butler's words, "one of the most severe jolts we have had."[82]

However, there was arguably another important reason for the discomfort many Tories seemed to experience upon reflecting on Hoare's reform proposal: a growing disquiet concerning the imperial policies which the Tory leadership had been pursuing since the mid-1920s, with a special concern that Indian nationalists might benefit from Conservative imperial mismanagement. In early 1934, Butler had prepared a list of talking-points for pro-reform politicians speaking at party meetings. Among these was a reminder that the party leadership was pursuing "a moderate Conservatism, the sort of Conservatism that has made South Africa a loyal and contented member of the Commonwealth, not the sort of Conservatism that lost the American colonies."[83] This was not a sentiment shared by all Conservatives.

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78 L. Stuart to V. Pearman (Churchill's secretary), 21 May 1933, CHAR 2/196/13; Note by G.N. Andrews in Churchill papers, 19 October 1933, CHAR 2/593/26.

79 *Guardian*, 22 June 1933; Sir Henry Gidney (Anglo-Indian and Domiciled European Association) to Lloyd, 5 October 1933, GLLD 17/15.

80 *Times*, 12 May 1932; Hailey to Findlater Stewart, 23 June 1932, Mss. Eur. e.220/24b/281–282; Amery diary, II/393–394, 5 April 1935.

81 On this affair generally, see Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 129–131; on the parlous nature of the IDL's finances, see Wolmer to Churchill, 9 November 1934, CHAR 2/227/55–56; Wolmer to H.A. Gwynne, 7 February 1936, Gwynne dep. 11. For the India Office's awareness of these missions and its search for material to discredit Rao in particular, see Hoare to Willingdon, 1 February 1934, Mss. Eur.e.240/4/966–977; Hoare to Anderson, 23 February 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/9/66–71; Hoare to Stanley, 28 June 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12b/334; Butler to Brabourne, 22 February 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/229–236.

82 Butler to Brabourne, 15 November 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/110–116.

83 Butler memorandum: "Points as to India which Government speakers might include in their speeches before the publication of the Joint Select Committee Report," February 1934, RAB f3/3/38.

"Dominion Status" and Conservative Anxiety

In recent years, historians have reconsidered Britain's interwar imperial policies. Whereas the period between the First and Second World Wars had once appeared as the premier example of enlightened and forward-looking imperialism, during which those parts of the Empire which had moved furthest towards responsible self-government completed, or nearly completed, the process, the 1920s and 1930s are now seen as years in which crafty British statesmen maneuvered to keep a less obvious, but still very effective hold on their imperial possessions.[84] The largely Conservative policy-makers of this period now appear to have been strong imperialists, determined to consolidate the Empire's position in the face of rising nationalist movements, and quite certain of their ability to do so. Those in government remained "confident" and "complacent" in their strategy of assuaging colonial nationalists with honeyed phrases and superficial concessions.[85] Was this the case? Did Conservatives, members of a party historically pledged to the maintenance of Empire, take such a sanguine view of the imperial future in a period which superficially at any rate seemed to offer less rosy prospects? There is compelling evidence that many Tories, even outside the ranks of the Die Hards, did not. The imperial policies of the Tory leadership had become a source of unease before 1929, and the advent of proposals for Indian political reform only aggravated this situation.

There were indeed substantial issues of colonial governance with which the Tories had had to reckon in the 1920s and early 1930s, and the Conservative leadership's handling of them had not produced among Tories a sense of imperial rejuvenation. Foremost among these concerns was this constitutional question of the status of the Dominions, including Australia and Canada among others. An examination of Tory opinion on the changes which altered the relationship between Britain and the "white" Dominions demonstrates that, despite a recognized need to institute these constitutional reforms, there was as well a marked unease among Conservatives about the ramifications of what they had done. The formalization and codification of "Dominion status" which occurred between 1926 and 1931 did not provide many Tories with a feeling of optimism about the future of the Empire, but instead prompted the realization that these constitutional theories, and the logic which underpinned them, might undermine Britain's international stature and could eventually lead to the secession of many of the non-white parts of the Empire as well, including, very likely sooner than later, India.

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84 Gallagher, *Decline Revival and Fall*, p. 121; Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*; J. Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline? Tendencies in British Imperial Policies between the Wars," *Historical Journal* 23/3 (1980), pp. 662–664.

85 Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline?," pp. 662–664.

The 1926 Imperial Conference had provided a chance for the Tories to refine and adjust Britain's relations with the so-called colonies of white settlement, thus averting the danger posed by nationalist feeling in the Irish Free State, South Africa and even Canada. Arthur Balfour, chosen to lead the conference's committee on intra-imperial relations, succeeded in producing a memorable, though intentionally vague, statement which acknowledged the right of the Dominions to legislate for themselves without any interference by Westminster. And the aging ex-Prime Minister seemed indeed to think that his deft phrase-making had only strengthened the bonds of imperial affection, telling a Canadian senator in early 1927: "We have been making, at first half consciously, and now with full consciousness, the most novel and the greatest experiment in Empire building which the world has ever seen."[86] Other reactions, though, were more subdued. There were, of course, angry Die Hard mutterings about the dangers of the Balfour Report and its concession of Dominion autonomy.[87] However, there were also some interesting reactions from people who seemed to champion "progressive" imperialism within the Conservative ranks. Some members of Baldwin's Cabinet expressed "some regrets" at the "formal surrender of historic rights which, though they had to some extent fallen into desuetude, might well ... be reserved for use in a time of crisis."[88] Baldwin himself, nearly a decade later, admitted that in 1926 "some curious things had been done in relation to the white parts of the Empire by such Imperialists as the late Lord Balfour and Mr. Amery."[89] Another ambivalent reaction came from the Colonial and (after 1926) Dominion Secretary himself, Leo Amery, a Fellow of All Souls' and disciple of Lionel Curtis, the theorist and proponent of British imperial federation.

Amery appeared to approach the Balfour Report with little trepidation. Indeed, as one analyst has put it, Amery's embrace of the Report "must rank as one of the most naive optimisms of all time."[90] But alongside Amery's sense that the declaration was "one of the big things I have worked for most of my life," there were also some hints of concern.[91] He was wary of offending the Australians and New Zealanders, the most conspicuously loyal parties at the 1926 conference, for the sake of appeasing others, writing to Balfour that "I hope ... that you realise that [Australia and New Zealand] are anything but happy over these discussions. We must be careful not to alienate the people who really matter in the Empire for the sake of the representatives of the extreme section

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86 Balfour to George Foster, 4 May 1927, British Library Balfour Papers, BL Add. Mss. 49697/40–41.

87 Lloyd to C.F. Adam, 29 August 1937, GLLD 19/6.

88 CAB 59/26, 17 November 1926.

89 Quoted in Williamson, *Stanley Baldwin*, p. 263.

90 R.F. Holland, *Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance 1918–1939* (London, 1981), p. 58.

91 L.S. Amery, *My Political Life: Volume II: War and Peace, 1914–1929* (London, 1953), p. 396.

in South Africa or of the Irish." He was also careful, when advising Balfour, to stipulate that the latter's statement and formula for imperial relations should carry "no possible suggestion of a [Dominion] freedom to dissociate [from the Empire-Commonwealth]."[92]

The most obvious symptom of Amery's nervousness about the future of the Commonwealth after 1926 was his intense drive to establish a system of intra-imperial trade. Though a proponent of such an arrangement well before 1926, after the Balfour Report he advocated such a scheme with an intensity which suggested that he was less than sure that the historic bonds of sentiment and the real bonds of finance capital were enough to keep the Dominions aligned with Britain. There was a need for more concrete steps. Amery said in 1927: "We have laid the foundations for cooperation at the last Imperial Conference. The next business is to get ahead with cooperation itself, and the one form of cooperation which underlies all others and indeed makes them possible is economic cooperation."[93] Amery's grand plans for imperial economic development were not taken up with great enthusiasm by the party leadership in the late 1920s, though that was not for lack of effort on his part. He and Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, waged a continual battle over colonial expenditure in these years, as Amery fought the dogmatic Chancellor for funding for imperial migration, development and the Empire Marketing Board, among other causes. Amery wrote Churchill off as a "Little Englander," and exhorted Baldwin to "talk straight to [Churchill] and make it clear to him that his duty is not to encourage the 'Little Englander' tendencies of his department but to sit on them."[94] Amery wished to see Churchill anywhere but at the Treasury, even suggesting that Baldwin move Churchill to the India Office in his next Cabinet reshuffle, though he did append a warning: "If the situation in India were really out of hand and in open rebellion or if there were war on the North West Frontier, he would do it admirably. But I am not so sure whether he might not precipitate the former even if it were not otherwise coming about."[95]

A further, and more specific, indication of Amery's unease about the possibility of Balfour's formula leading to, even encouraging, imperial fragmentation came during his imperial tour of 1927–1928. In fact, Amery later admitted that concern over the way in which the Dominions might interpret the Balfour formula and its description of the Dominions as "autonomous entities" had led him to the idea of the tour: "I feared that there was a real danger of serious misunderstanding.

[92] Amery to Balfour, 1 November 1926, BL. Add. Mss. 49775/234–236.

[93] Amery to Baldwin, 24 September 1927, SB 96/121–128.

[94] Amery to Baldwin, 22 February 1927, SB 96/205–208; for further examples of Amery's campaign against Churchill see, Amery to Baldwin, 11 April 1927, SB 94/69–70 and Amery to Baldwin 27 February 1929, SB 98/2–10.

[95] Amery to Baldwin, 27 April 1929, SB 36/144–146.

I felt that the famous sentence, in which the nature of the Commonwealth was defined in essentially negative terms, was receiving undue attention." He perceived that "in those quarters where the greatest stress was laid on the recognition of the independence and equality of the Dominions ... this [emphasis] implied on their part a policy of irresponsibility and isolation."[96] In this spirit he approached Baldwin in March 1927 about a tour of the Dominions, telling the Prime Minister that he "regard[ed] this visit of mine to the Dominions as an essential act of Imperial policy." Not lacking in self-confidence, he predicted that:

> the constitutional declaration of the late Conference, though it satisfied us all, is susceptible of a good many shades of interpretation, some of them in directions which would undoubtedly tend to weaken the whole unity of the Empire. I have sufficient faith in myself to believe that I could do a good deal in a few public speeches to ensure the prevalence of the right view on these matters, without at the same time creating any controversy. To do so later on might easily create controversy, if opinion had begun to crystallise in the wrong directions.[97]

Having finally received permission to embark, perhaps because Baldwin shared Amery's concerns (or merely because a weary Baldwin wished a long vacation from his hyperactive Colonial Secretary), Amery sailed for South Africa in the early autumn of 1927. It was at South Africa that his journey seemed directed all along. Although Amery's perambulations later took him through Australia, New Zealand and Canada, these areas were not sources of concern. Although he had vague suspicions of a "strong Bolshevik-cum-Sinn Fein element" in Australian politics, he had concluded that there was really little cause for worry there, and no reason at all to fret over the loyalty of New Zealanders for they were "a splendid little people and the Empire is almost a religion with them."[98] South Africa was much more troubling. Although Amery had been able to exult to Baldwin in December, 1926: "was ever a heart won so completely as Hertzog [the South African Prime Minister]?", the general political situation in South Africa was not as reassuring. Despite his professed desire to stay away from controversy, Amery could not resist, once in the Dominion, joining the dispute raging over the South African flag. He later confided that "[I] pushed very hard on Hertzog and Smuts in private."[99] The compromise which he proposed suggests the importance he attached to keeping South Africa firmly within the Empire: "My own view is that

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96 Amery, *My Political Life*, vol. II, p. 399.

97 Amery to Baldwin, 1 March 1927, SB 96/111–115.

98 Amery to Baldwin, 30 December 1927, SB 96/147–149.

99 Amery to Baldwin, 11 January 1928, SB, 96/150–152.

as long as the Union Jack is flown regularly on every public building in South Africa it does not much matter what kind of local flag is flown with it."[100]

Even more indicative of Amery's concern for the future path of South Africa were the suggestions he repeatedly made to Baldwin, during his tour, about the development of the South African protectorates, including Swaziland, Bechuanaland and Basutoland. In his memoirs, Amery claimed that his push for the economic support of these regions was motivated solely by the disinterested desire that they be "more fit to stand up to the impact" of their eventual transfer to South Africa and that Hertzog was most agreeable when told that such a transfer was not feasible for at least another decade.[101] However, Amery's concern to develop the protectorates had an element of political calculation as well. When he told Baldwin that "the future position of the Empire in South Africa is going to depend very largely on the Protectorates and Rhodesia," he meant not only that a skillful policy of development might consolidate the area of British control, but that these regions might also serve as a check on the Dominion of South Africa itself. If the British Government could bring out "white" settlers from England to Swaziland "in the next 4 or 5 years we shall have carried the British element beyond Natal right up the eastern border of the Union and made its position secure against swamping by the policy of giving all the land to poor Dutch whites when transfer takes place." Moreover, he planned to use the newly-developed Protectorates to dazzle and then befuddle South African Nationalists:

> the more we do for the development of the Protectorates the greater the prize that is dangled before the eyes of the Union and the greater the influence in keeping the Union straight ... we have an opportunity of so developing the Protectorates as to raise greatly the credit of the Imperial Government and to exercise a far reaching effect both upon the Imperial policy and the native policy of the Union.[102]

During his stay in South Africa, Amery reiterated to Baldwin his ideas for the support of the Protectorates, adding further that such aid might appease white settlers already in the Protectorates and prevent them from agitating for transfer to South African control: "It is not mere development of a small backward territory like Swaziland which is in question, desirable though that would be in itself, but the whole future of South Africa."[103] Even at the conclusion of the Australian leg of his tour, Amery still had South Africa on his mind, telling Baldwin, "I am

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100 Amery to Baldwin, 24 September 1927, SB, 96/121–128.

101 Amery, *My Political Life*, vol. II, p. 415.

102 Amery to Baldwin, 24 September 1927, SB 96/121–128.

103 Amery to Baldwin, 4 October 1927, SB, 96/129–130.

relying on you to see through my recommendations about the Protectorates, and more particularly Swaziland."[104]

Amery's words and actions in the two and a half years he had left in the Colonial and Dominions Offices after 1926 clearly indicate that he had serious concerns about the Empire's future in a post-Balfour world. His drive to secure an all-encompassing imperial trade policy and to promote imperial economic development, and the almost frantic energy with which he pursued this goal after 1926 indicate the weight he placed on a positive, forward economic policy to bind the Empire together. Failing that though, as his 1927 suggestion for securing some sort of leverage over South Africa through the agency of the protectorates suggests, he was willing to explore more devious ways of keeping the Dominions in line.

Evidence of unease about the nature of the imperial relationship adumbrated by Balfour and codified in the Statute of Westminster was also present in the editorial columns of the Conservative press, both the broadsheets and the tabloids. Although, at first glance, there seemed to be nothing but praise for the timely recognition of a new relationship between the Dominions and the Mother Country which had been evolving for a long time, a closer reading of the reactions of the Tory press reveals some inquietude, and more than a hint of regret.

In November, 1926, praise for Balfour's magic formula was nearly universal. The only sour note came from the Labour *Daily Herald* which called the Report "a masterpiece of evasion which must have reminded Lord Balfour of old times."[105] Not only had the Report apparently ensured the continued unity of the Commonwealth/Empire, it had done so without generating any formal legal documents. The *Spectator* gushed that Balfour had crafted not "a written constitution which will bind future generations, but rather a confession of faith," while *The Times* expressed relief that he had "frankly and prudently declined the task of 'attempting to lay down a constitution for the British Empire.'"[106] As the *Daily Mail* put it, "The Empire is held together not by logic or by force or by arbitrary compacts."[107] There was among the press, then, a strong sense that Britain had strengthened itself most by appearing to have given nothing away. The outward fabric of Empire was preserved, and any explicit statement of Imperial dissolution averted. Yet the occasion seems to have been more one for relief than for rejoicing.

Conservative ambivalence, and even some real pessimism, about the potential consequences of the effort to smooth relations with the Dominions in the mid-1920s showed little sign of decreasing even after the advent of the National

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104 Amery to Baldwin, 19 November 1927, SB, 96/137–144.

105 *Daily Herald*, 22 November 1926.

106 *Spectator*, 27 November 1926; *Times*, 22 November 1926; see also: *Telegraph*, 22 November 1926; *Express*, 22 November 1926; *Yorkshire Post*, 22 November 1926.

107 *Mail*, 22 November 1926.

Government in 1931. In autumn 1931, the new Government introduced the Statute of Westminster, legislation promised to the Dominions as the follow-up to the Balfour Report, and which formally codified in statute law the right of the Dominions to legislate for themselves without any interference from Westminster. The crafting of the legislation had been going on at imperial conferences since 1926, so the Statute's arrival in the House of Commons was hardly a surprise. Nor, as might have been expected from the tone of earlier reactions to Balfour's work, did this less ambiguous constitutional statement find much of a welcome.

Since the Statute was introduced in the hectic first months of the National Government, it attracted less attention than it might have done, and none that was specific save for some consideration of the effect the Statute might have on the Irish Free State. It also received far less praise than that lavished on the Balfour Report. Those leading articles which did comment on the Statute illustrated that "[w]hile ... the Statute of Westminster had the support of all parties in the House of Commons because it was what dominion governments requested, there was little enthusiasm for it in Britain save among left-wing reformers and progressive academics inspired by a Fabian zeal for planning."[108]

The Irish question received the most attention. Churchill and his allies were concerned that the Free State might take advantage of the theoretical rights conferred by the Statute and break the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 as the first step to complete secession from the Commonwealth. Churchill's attempt to amend the Statute by excluding the 1921 Treaty from its scope found little support in the Tory press though. There was an air of resignation among the papers about Irish affairs. The *Times* questioned the necessity of "paper safeguards, which are needless if there is good faith, and of no avail if there is not."[109] Of Eamon de Valera and his plans, the *Telegraph* concluded that "legality would be no hindrance."[110] Some in the press even echoed Amery's concerns that legal definitions were not enough to hold the Dominions, and blasted Churchill for questioning the Dominions' good faith and endangering the real need for economic unity by making "Imperial cooperation more difficult just at a time when every effort is needed to make it easier."[111]

The Statute as a whole was also met with more resignation than joy. The *Yorkshire Post* grumbled that "[m]inds molded in the British tradition will never love the Statute ... Why should we now desert this successful British method of ours, and follow instead after the Americans and the Latins, with their worship of a written

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108 Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs: Problems of Wartime Cooperation and Post-War Change* (Oxford, 1958), p. 9.

109 *Times*, 20 November 1931.

110 *Telegraph*, 24 November 1931.

111 *Times*, 23 November 1931; see also *Telegraph*, 24 November 1931.

Constitution?"[112] The *Times* which had lauded Balfour in 1926 for not producing any precise constitutional or legislative mechanism, lamented in 1931 that "all the Dominions have not the English tradition, and it was not perhaps expected that they should look at constitutional questions in the common-sense way in which Englishmen are accustomed to regard them."[113] Leo Amery, unconvinced in 1926 that constitutional concessions were enough to hold together the Commonwealth, had not changed his opinion either, as he thought the Statute "inevitable perhaps though full of dangers unless we get ahead with our unifying policy much more rapidly than the present crowd looks like doing."[114]

It was clearly not the case that the constitutional changes of 1926 and 1931 failed "to evoke any reaction in British opinion whether in cabinet, at Westminster, or 'out-of-doors.'"[115] Inspection of the Tory press indicates that, while there was no uproar, there was, in fact, a significant response to both, and it was hardly sanguine. Although Conservative leader-writers immediately praised Balfour's formula, deeper suspicions lurked about the direction of imperial policy. This was evident in the generally resigned nature of many editorials and in the insistence, most pronounced during the Irish debate in 1931, that the major goal of imperial economic cooperation remained tantalizingly out of reach. However, the best indication of mixed feelings over "Dominion status" was the manner in which the press regretted the evolution of policy from a rhetorical paragraph in 1926 to a formal, codified Statute in 1931. Those who had hailed Balfour for declining to create an Imperial constitution were dismayed at the Statute which finally resulted. Though the Commons could hardly defeat the measure, which was a logical and therefore inescapable outcome of Balfour's Report, the Tory press evinced a reaction which was barely polite. The wearied, and distinctly condescending, comment was publicly explained by a traditional English preference for flexible, loosely-defined "constitutions." It was rather more specific than that though; it was a reaction to the fact that the Statute conceded what Balfour had evaded: the formal recognition and precise definition of Dominion sovereignty. Vague phrases were one thing; entirely another matter was statute law which recognized the constitutional changes which one historian has conceded "removed at a blow the most fundamental principle of common action without which the empire could hardly claim to be a political unit of any kind."[116] It was sourness, not

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112 *Yorkshire Post*, 25 November 1931.

113 *Times*, 24 November 1931.

114 Amery diary II/221, 24 November 1931. For another MP's opposition to the Statute, see E. Marjoribanks to Swinton, 10 December 1931, Swinton Papers, Churchill College, SWIN II/3/2.

115 Darwin, "Imperialism in Decline?" p. 661.

116 *Ibid.*, p. 665.

confidence which led the *Times* to label its leader on the Statute: "Inevitable Pedantry."[117]

These examples of Conservative reaction to the constitutional evolution of the Dominions, then, help to demonstrate that party opinion was not universally optimistic nor enthusiastic about this development. There existed both a concern, in Amery's case especially, that defining "Dominion status" would not alone halt centrifugal impulses within the Empire-Commonwealth, and a pronounced dismay that this new legislation had made publicly explicit real limitations on Britain's control of its empire. However, perhaps the most telling sign that many Tories did not see Balfour's work as a skillful instrument of Empire was the dramatic change which the formalization of "Dominion status" wrought in Conservative discourse and policy regarding India.

The events of late 1929, specifically the dispute over Irwin's proposed declaration, furnished the first example of this new attitude. One biographer of Lord Irwin has claimed that the Viceroy, in proposing a declaration which promised "Dominion Status" for India, managed to conceal from his fellow Conservatives the fact that this phrase had taken on a vastly different meaning in the years since Montagu had employed it in 1917.[118] On the contrary, the way in which Irwin presented to his fellow Tories his plan for the declaration indicates that he was quite aware of the implications of the Balfour Report, and equally conscious that he must deal with this constitutional evolution authoritatively so as to assuage the fears of many Conservatives about exactly what "Dominion status" meant for India. It is also evident that Irwin saw that, on this matter, he needed not only to address the obvious concerns of the Die Hards, but to reassure the majority of the parliamentary party as well.[119] Irwin's solution was to send Baldwin, Davidson and others in the party leadership a painstakingly crafted explanation of the exact meaning of his proposed statement. He argued that his declaration would be one of "Purpose" and not "Method or Policy;" and that his words were limited "to the sphere of Purpose, and, therefore, the question is whether or not it is dangerous to proclaim Dominion Status as the purpose." Moreover, he claimed that announcing Britain's "purpose" of conferring Dominionhood on India was in no "substantial" way different from the current promise of eventual "Responsible Government" for India: "The problems that evidently have to be surmounted by India before she attains Dominion Status have not less certainly got to be surmounted before she can attain full Responsible

117 After his initial reaction, Dawson seemed to grow more accepting of the Statute as representing "a relationship between this country and the Dominions which for all practical purposes was already in existence." Dawson to O. Seaman, 8 June 1932, Bodleian Library Dawson Mss. 77/49–50.

118 Roberts, *"The Holy Fox"*, pp. 26–27.

119 Irwin to Halifax, 4 November 1929, Mss. Eur. e.152/27/166.

Government, and I suggest that *when* she has got the latter ... she will have in practice attained Dominion Status, or at least this will be the inevitable sequence in her constitutional development." Irwin focused as well on what he perceived to be the "fundamental distinction between the general political thought of Great Britain and India," noting that the very phrase "Dominion status" would mean something different to the Indians: "the Indian is not so much concerned with the *achieved constitutional state*, in the British sense, as he is with what he would consider *the indefeasible assurance of such achievement*, from which the future and complete enjoyment of Dominion privilege will spring ... [and] the promise of full rights to come." [emphasis in text][120]

Irwin also sought to reassure Reading, the former Viceroy whose opinion might sway the broad center of the Tory party. In changing the draft of his declaration to read: "I am authorised ... to state clearly that ... it is implicit in the Declaration of 1917 that the natural issue of India's progress *as there contemplated* is the attainment of Dominion status, "Irwin felt he could tell Reading that the effect of the new phrasing was "to link up what is now said, much more closely than it even might have appeared to be linked before, with the method and atmosphere of the 1917 Declaration."[121] Irwin was anxious to make it clear that his declaration grew naturally out of the cautious promise made in 1917, rather than being an embrace of new principles for Indian self-government. The Viceroy's final tactic was to reiterate his earlier warning that the failure to deal with Indian reform only heightened the danger that India might withdraw from any Imperial connection at all.[122] As he told Davidson: "the real question [was] whether all this India nationalism that is growing, and bound to grow, can be guided along imperial lines or will more and more get deflected on to separatist lines."[123]

Irwin's instincts about the reaction of his fellow Conservatives to the Dominion status declaration were sound. Confronted with the Viceroy's use of the phrase regarding India, many in the party soon grasped that, although the Balfour Report was intended to strengthen bonds with the Dominions, its description of Dominionhood was also problematical. It now seemed imperative to many Tories to prevent any association of India, and by implication the other non-white colonies, with the recently defined "Dominion status," that dangerous phrase which certainly promised legislative autonomy and might even permit later secession from the Empire.[124] Salisbury, the Tory leader in the Lords, protested vehemently any such

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120 Irwin to Baldwin, 8 October 1929, SB 103/81–86.

121 Irwin to Reading, 8 October 1929, copy at JCCD 189.

122 Irwin to Baldwin, 23 April 1929, SB 103/27–30; Irwin to Baldwin, 19 September 1929, SB 103/58–59.

123 Irwin to Davidson, 5 December 1929, JCCD 188.

124 Among the Die Hards, Reginald Craddock emphasized the possibility of secession inherent in the Balfour formula: see his November 1930 pamphlet for the IES, "The Simon

link, and Neville Chamberlain recorded the response of the parliamentary party to the news of the proposed declaration: "We had our party meeting on Wednesday when S.B. had to confirm the India rumour. There was a sort of gasp and as far as I could see no one in the party approved what he had done."[125] Leo Amery noted that most of his Shadow Cabinet "colleagues were horrified" at the prospect of confirming that India would eventually attain Dominion status.[126] And Irwin's arguments had failed to bring Reading around either.[127]

Baldwin only narrowly averted a party crisis when the Irwin declaration came to a vote in November 1929, but this did not discourage the Viceroy in his efforts to convince wary Conservatives that announcing the goal of Dominionhood for India was not as fraught with danger as they thought. Irwin himself was not totally blinded to the implications of the Balfour Report for India, for he had told Benn that a Dominion effort to secede from the Empire "if it were effectively made, would be legally inadmissable, but, in the case of the Dominions, not to be denied."[128] Yet the Viceroy persisted in his belief that not only would Indians see Dominionhood as a status achievable only after a long transitional period, but that they would accept a "Dominion status" which included safeguards and conditions, effectively precluding them from attaining the same untrammeled freedom of action as the "white" Dominions.[129]

The majority of the Tory leadership, excluding the already-converted Baldwin and Hoare, was not convinced, and felt the only safe course was to prevent the words "India" and "Dominion" from ever occurring together, whether in the same breath or in the same document. This determination became clear in the summer of 1930, when MacDonald proposed announcing that the purpose of the upcoming Round Table Conference was to draft a "Dominion" constitution for India. At an all-party conference to discuss MacDonald's proposal, Austen Chamberlain, backed by Reading, Peel, Salisbury, Lord Hailsham, and Neville Chamberlain, seized the lead of the Tory delegation, relegating Baldwin to the role of interested spectator. Chamberlain felt that MacDonald's statement "introduced what I had always felt to be the dangerous phrase 'dominion status' and it put that subject forward as the purpose of the Conference. This would be

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Report and After," pp. 3–4.

125 Salisbury to Baldwin, 23 October 1929, SB 103/63–66; N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 26 October 1929, NC 18/1/674. See also N. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 22 October 1929, NC 18/1/673.

126 Amery diary II/52, 23 October 1929.

127 Garvin to Reading, 6 November 1929, Mss. Eur. f.118/24/12.

128 Irwin to Benn, 9 January 1930, Mss. Eur. c.152/6.

129 Draft of Irwin speech to Indian Assembly, 25 January 1930, L/PO/6/2a/247–249; Irwin to Lang, 31 March 1930, Lang Papers 41/279–284; Irwin to Baldwin, 13 May 1930, SB 104/11–14.

read in India as a complete surrender to Gandhi's demand."[130] As Chamberlain later told Malcolm Hailey, he had disliked the Irwin Declaration, and though he realized it was not possible to turn back the clock entirely, he remained "distrustful" and determined to moderate any further Indian policies.[131] The Chamberlains and their allies gave Baldwin little choice but to agree with their determination not "to give assent to any form of words which implied that the Conference would meet to devise a Dominion Constitution."[132] Baldwin then notified Irwin, who supported MacDonald's proposal, that the Conservatives "cannot ourselves accept any responsibility for the repetition at this stage of the words Dominion Status."[133] In the end, the combination of opposition from both Chamberlain's Conservatives and Reading's Liberals forced MacDonald to reconsider, and to draft a much more innocuous statement of purpose for the conference.[134] Nor was MacDonald successful several months later, during the conference itself, in resurrecting his proposed statement as a way of responding to the federal plan put forward by the Indian delegations. Reading, according to one observer, remained "obsessed w[ith] Dominion Status," and Hailey, Irwin's unofficial representative at the conference, noted that Hoare was:

> perfectly clear that the mass of the Conservative Party would resent deeply any initial agreement to concede this point [the use of 'Dominion status'] ... It is difficult to describe the irritation with which most Conservatives and some Liberals approach this question ... I confess I had not realized the strength of feeling among the bulk of the Conservatives regarding the use of the word, nor the apprehensions of the Liberals regarding the implications which it involves.[135]

Witnessing Hoare's continuing struggle with the rest of the Tory party, Hailey commented a few days later: "I am sure ... that at the moment any rumour that the Government was prepared to give Dominion Status to India, with whatever safeguards, would cause what the Irish call 'Hell's delight' among the conservative rump; not the less that they feel that such a declaration would be liable to grave misuse in India."[136] Garvin succinctly summed up the leadership's predicament: they were unable to use that "useless + unworthy phrase, 'but' [n]o analogy

130 A. Chamberlain memorandum, 27 June 1930, AC 22/3/27.

131 Hailey to Willingdon, 15 July 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/34.

132 A. Chamberlain memorandum, 1 July 1930, AC 22/3/29.

133 Baldwin to Irwin, 4 July 1930, L/PO/6/52/63–68.

134 A. Chamberlain memorandum, 10 July 1930, AC 22/3/43.

135 Dawson diary, 9 November 1930, Mss. Dawson 34; Hailey to Irwin, 14 November 1930, Mss. Eur. e.220/34.

136 Hailey to Irwin, 27 November 1930, Mss. Eur. e.220/34.

for what must be created exists within the Empire; no sufficient analogy exists anywhere else."[137]

The Spectre of "Congress De Valera's"

Unfortunately for Hoare at this time, during the Tory encounter with two tricky imperial questions, namely the future of India and the usefulness of "Dominion status," there emerged a third issue which soon became entangled in the controversy. It was Ireland, specifically Anglo-Irish relations since the end of the First World War, a subject that informed not only protests against any extension of such status to India, but also a larger reaction against the usefulness of the strategy of appeasing nationalists with carefully calculated constitutional concessions. Hoare was either deceiving himself, or for once dangerously out of touch with his party, when he predicted to the Viceroy in early 1932: "In any case, nothing that happens in Ireland should have the least reaction upon our Indian policy."[138]

The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 created the Irish Free State and a partitioned Ireland. Many of its signatories found that their acquiescence carried a great political price. On the Irish side, of course, there was civil war and the creation of political alignments which have basically survived to this day. No blood was shed in Westminster, but the British signatories, especially the Conservatives among them, found less than universal support. One Tory, Lord Birkenhead, was labeled a "traitor" for a time, though he was given the chance to rehabilitate himself as Indian Secretary in the mid-1920s. The desire to right himself with the party's right-wing may have combined with his personal prejudices against Indians generally, for, as we have seen, he pursued a quite reactionary line towards Indian political reform.

The fate of Ireland remained an important issue among the Conservative right-wing, which had traditionally championed the "union" of Britain and Ireland. Irish developments did nothing to alleviate their growing concern. The settlement of the Irish boundary between North and South, the fruitless struggle of Irish Loyalists to gain compensation from the Government for their losses, and the prominent role played by the Free State leader Kevin O'Higgins in the making of Balfour's Dominion Status declaration, all provided ammunition to

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137 Garvin notes on letter from Hydari to Garvin, 21 October 1930, Garvin Mss. By 1934, however, Garvin had apparently come around to the Government's position, noting that "The proposition is ***not*** 'Dominion Status for British India' *but* Federalism *and safeguards*." Garvin notebook #143: "India, 1934," Garvin Mss.

138 Hoare to Willingdon, 24 March 1932, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/230–234; for similar sentiments, see Hoare to Butler, 14 April 1932, RAB G4/24–25.

the Die Hards. Garvin warned Reading in 1929 against Irwin's plans for India: "Remember Ireland ... failure of Conference; and things suddenly sweeping by themselves towards terror and disruption."[139] The continued shadow of the 1921 treaty was evident in 1930 when the Conservative Party selected its delegation to the first Round Table Conference with Indian politicians. The party leadership wished to include Austen Chamberlain, a Tory elder statesman, but one who had signed the Irish Treaty along with Birkenhead. The Die Hard wing, through Lord Salisbury, the Conservative leader in the House of Lords, quickly blocked Chamberlain's selection, claiming that Chamberlain lacked "antecedents which inspire confidence" and that "his Irish record is a formidable handicap."[140]

By 1931, however, it was not just the extreme right-wingers in the party who saw Ireland as an object lesson in the futility of negotiated concessions with wayward colonials. The late 1920s had seen the return of Eamon de Valera to Irish politics after his failure to overturn the Free State set up by the treaty. Conservative unease grew in direct proportion to increasing support in Ireland for De Valera's Fianna Fail party. And a sure sign of things to come came, upon his formal entry into the Dail, the Irish parliament, when in a characteristic display of casuistry he managed to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Crown and at the same time to deny any meaning to the words. As we have seen, the imminent prospect of a de Valera-led Free State had prompted Churchill's attempt to amend the Statute of Westminster, and had also caused many in the Tory press largely to write off Ireland as a lost cause. Churchill would prove prescient in his assertion in late 1931 that it was "even money that De Valera will have the control of the Irish Government very soon."[141]

Within the Conservative party, both in Westminster and at the local level, there was an increasing fear that further constitutional reform in India might only lead to an Indian De Valera. Sam Hoare tried to allay these concerns in an article in the *Morning Post*, the Die Hard newspaper of choice, and circulated his article to all the members of his Chelsea constituency in pamphlet form, under the headline: "Future of India: Attitude of the Conservative Party Defined: No Repetition of the Irish Surrender." Hoare compared the safeguards and reserved powers which would accompany any Indian settlement to the lack thereof in the Irish Treaty; he also noted the very deliberate speed at which any legislation would progress. "There will be no truckling to the terrorists," he promised.[142] The party released two further publications by Hoare in 1931 which reinforced his message.[143] Yet, days after taking the Indian portfolio in the Cabinet in late 1931,

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[139] Garvin to Reading, 6 November 1929, Mss. Eur. f.118/24/12.

[140] Salisbury to Baldwin, 4 August 1930, SB 104/23–26.

[141] Churchill to A. Chamberlain, 22 November 1931, AC 39/3/42.

[142] Hoare to Chelsea CUA, March 1931, Templewood Cambridge VI/1/52.

[143] "India: An Offical Statement of Conservative Policy", CPA Pamphlets, 1931/30; Hoare in the *Morning Post*, 5 February 1931.

he admitted the difficulty of his position, noting that it was still the case that "the great body of opinion in this country is dead against anything in the nature of a surrender on the lines of the Irish Treaty."[144]

The victory of De Valera's party in 1932, and the Irish leader's rapid moves, perfectly legal under the provisions of the Statute of Westminster, to abolish the Oath of Allegiance and to stop land payments mandated under the 1921 treaty, only confirmed Tory attitudes. At its annual conference in 1932, the Conservative associations from all over the country resolved unanimously, and explicitly, that any Indian reform must insure that the Congress Party could not follow the Irish lead.[145] To the offending Irish measures themselves, the National Government reacted quickly. As several historians have noted, Baldwin, Neville Chamberlain and others in the leadership demonstrated their imperial resolve by putting punitive tariffs on Irish goods, and by bringing right-wing Tories like Lord Hailsham onto the Irish Situation Committee set up to consider policy.[146] These measures served to keep Churchill and Salisbury, who were coordinating their efforts to pressure the Cabinet on the issue, at least "not ... dissatisfied" with the government's response to De Valera.[147] After the announcement of the Government's hard-line stance on Ireland, Salisbury thanked Baldwin for demonstrating to the Irish that "we are in earnest."[148] The Die Hards, of course, were never fully mollified at any time; at this juncture Churchill and Page Croft were also preparing to challenge the Government over the on-going progress of self-government in Ceylon.[149]

The party propaganda machine increased its output as well, if only to match Die Hard comparisons of Ireland and India.[150] Butler and the India Office prepared talking points for defending the proposed All India Federation of autonomous provinces and princely states. Butler succinctly noted, "Policy – No Ireland / Responsibility with safeguards."[151] The Union of Britain and India, took

144 Hoare to Willingdon, 2 September 1931, Mss. Eur. e.240/1/1–6.

145 1932 Conference Report, CPA microfilm.

146 See Deidre McMahon, *Republicans & Imperialists: Anglo-Irish Relations in the 1930s* (New Haven, 1984), pp. 30–34.

147 Salisbury to Baldwin, 7 March 1932, SB 101/249–250; Salisbury to Churchill, 7 May 1932, CHAR 2/589/29; Churchill to Salisbury, 9 May 1932, CHAR 2/589/30; Salisbury to Churchill, 7 June 1932, CHAR 2/589/31.

148 Salisbury to Baldwin, 13 May 1932, SB 101/251. The Cabinet, likely mindful of Conservative feeling on the issue, had not followed the suggestions of Frank Pakenham, who had met with the Irish leadership, that a policy of negotiation and an avoidance of punitive sanctions was the best strategy. See Pakenhham memorandum, SB 101/255–260.

149 Churchill to G. Cornwallis-West, 24 May 1932, CHAR 2/189/52.

150 IES Pamphlet #11, "The Federation of India: A Dangerous Illusion" (March 1931); *Indian Empire Review*, November 1932 and June 1933.

151 "Notes for a speech on India by RAB", February 1933, RAB F1/29.

a similar tack in its literature and through the speakers which it dispatched to local Conservative Associations.[152] Younger Tory MP's like Mark Patrick and Victor Cazalet included a section on Ireland in their pro-federation publication, "India from a Back Bench."[153]

The Die Hards were implacable. As Page Croft declared, in referring to the "great Irish betrayal" of 1921, "we were right about Ireland, and we are anxious about India, where 'Wilsonism' is apparently to be tried again." And the prominent constitutional lawyer and scholar, Arthur Berriedale Keith, publicly argued that Ireland demonstrated the futility of mixing safeguards with the assurance of responsible government. The India Defence League warned that the White Paper would turn over India to rule by "the Congress De Valeras."[154] In response, local Conservative Agents moved to spread the word that "the case of Ireland has no relation to India."[155] That the advice to do so had appeared in the agents' own journal made it clear that either they, in the constituencies, or the Conservative bureaucrats at the party's central office, were responding to an evident unease about India among the Tory rank and file. A letter to Davidson from some leading members of his own constituency organization tends to confirm this.[156] A party leaflet in late 1933 devoted to answering "seven critical questions" about the India Bill declared that "the evil of the Irish settlement was that there were no safeguards. The Indian safeguards are real."[157] The pressure from anti-reform forces did not let up, though. Even as late as November 1934 the *Daily Mail* was asking: "Will India Copy Southern Ireland?"[158] The equation of Ireland with India led as well to something of a *rapprochement* between Churchill and Sir Edward Carson. From 1912 through 1914 Churchill, then a Liberal, had led that party's fight for Irish Home Rule against Carson's vehement opposition; in 1934, they found themselves on the same side of the fight, as Churchill noted in a letter to his former enemy: "Now I am able to understand something of what you must have felt when all the events in Ireland were going forward. We must

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152 UBI pamphlet, "India: The White Paper" (1933), RAB F70, esp. pp. 38–39.

153 RAB F71, esp. pp. 67–68.

154 IDL pamphlet: "Pure Folly (The White Paper Proposals for India)," July 1933, GLLD 17/22.

155 Page Croft editorial in *National Review*, November 1932; A. Berriedale Keith, Letter to the Editor, *Guardian*, 13 February 1933; *The Conservative Agent's Journal*, June 1933, pp. 193–195. See also Page Croft article in *Financial Times*, 14 March 1933.

156 39 Berkhamsted constituents to Davidson, 28 February 1933, JCCD 201.

157 "Plain Facts about the Indian Scheme: Answers to Seven Critical Questions", April 1933, CPA Pamphlets, 1933/10; see also "Indian Constitutional Reform: Questions and Answers", May, 1933, CPA Pamphlets, 1933/11.

158 *Daily Mail*, 20 November 1934.

make a great effort to save India."[159] Thus, when in 1934 Baldwin at last had to appeal directly to party gatherings like the Conference or the Central Council for support of his India policy, he devoted both time and energy to explaining why India was not Ireland, nor ever would be.

Having seemingly answered Tory concerns over a repeat of the Irish case, Hoare might have thought himself over the last imperial hurdle. This was not to be. Although Hoare had managed to keep the specific phrase "Dominion status" largely out of sight since the Round Table Conferences, with the exception of Churchill's testimony given to the parliamentary Joint Select Committee,[160] he found himself grappling with this phrase, and the emotions it provoked, when he came to write the actual Government of India Bill in early 1935. In late 1934 and early 1935, as Hoare drafted the India Bill, he received urgent entreaties from Willingdon, Brabourne, Irwin and Sapru. Each urged him to insert some reference to India's future attainment of Dominion Status in the Bill.[161] Although Hoare was initially willing to explore the idea of drafting a preamble for that purpose, he soon retreated. He warned Willingdon:

> No one here likes Preambles, and I am afraid that the inclusion of one in the Bill will stimulate an embarrassing discussion upon Dominion Status ... I am not sure whether you and your advisers quite realise the difficulties connected with anything in the nature of a specific pledge on the subject. The Statute of Westminster has completely changed the position from what it was when [Irwin] made his speech.[162]

The Cabinet agreed with this view, and Hoare told the Viceroy that "after the Statute of Westminster ... it is impossible to include a phrase that without explanation would create the most serious trouble here and probably a good deal of misunderstanding in India."[163]

Hoare's rationale for avoiding any mention of Dominion Status was based on the realization that such a phrase, and now more especially since the Statute of 1931, was far too dangerous in the already fraught atmosphere which surrounded the India Bill. Hoare answered Willingdon's criticism:

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159 Churchill to Carson, 27 October 1934, CHAR 2/209/34.

160 Hailey to Willingdon, 3 November 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/34.

161 Willingdon to Hoare, 11 December 1934, Templewood India Papers, India Office, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/408; Irwin to Hoare, 16 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/76/97–103; Sapru to Hoare, 4 March 1935, L/PO/6/92/321–322; see also, Erskine to Hoare, 31 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/10/66–68; Erskine to Hoare, 2 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/10/71–74.

162 Hoare to Willingdon, 10 January 1935, E240/4/1213–1219a.

163 Hoare to Willingdon, 17 January 1935, E240/4/1219–1223.

> All that I will say is that I here fully realise the importance that Indians attach to the question. I feel sure that you also realise our difficulties, not only with my Conservative friends, but with many Liberals and even some of the Labour people ... It may interest you to know that Austen Chamberlain and Eustace Percy ... told me that if there had been a preamble on the lines demanded by most Indians, the Bill never would pass and that they and their friends would find themselves in opposition.[164]

Samuel Hoare may sometimes have been inclined to political panic, but his continuing, repetitive, arguments with Willingdon on this theme clearly indicate that Hoare was aware of some formidable reluctance among the Tory backbenchers, many of whom supported the Bill only because of Austen Chamberlain's lead, to promise India such a specifically defined status. Although Chamberlain had not raised the issue publicly as he had done in 1930, Churchill and his fellow Die Hards had made sure that the question of India's precise constitutional status remained an active concern, in 1933 especially, as they argued that "Dominion status," as now formally defined by the Statute of Westminster, was far too dangerous to be granted to India.[165]

Hoare did make a half-hearted attempt to assuage Indian and Viceregal feelings by adding some carefully crafted remarks to his introduction of the Second Reading of the India Bill. He was brief, and brilliantly imprecise. In January 1935, he had sought the opinions of Dawson and Sir Reginald Coupland, the Beit Professor of Imperial History at Oxford. Both had provided him with the basis for an argument against drawing up a Preamble which dealt with India's future as a Dominion. Coupland and Dawson emphasized that Dominion status was a condition which could be recognized or acknowledged, but could not be promised or simply enacted through legislation; the phrase was intended to denote something already achieved. Britain could not even promise that India would ever gain such status, except to say that it might become a possibility if India was able to govern itself in such a way to impress British opinion. The 1935 plan was simply intended to help Indians down the road towards a self-rule which might eventually earn them this prized designation. In essence, this argument held that India could, with work, attain self-government, but that self-rule did not automatically confer Dominion status – only a satisfactory period of autonomous existence could do this.[166]

Thus advised, Hoare proclaimed no need for a Preamble, as the preamble of the 1919 India Act remained applicable. The Government still stood by Irwin's

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[164] Hoare to Willingdon, 24 January 1935, E240/4/1224–1227.

[165] N.S. Sandeman to Churchill, 20 November 1933, CHAR 2/194/117–118.

[166] See Hoare's notes of discussions with Dawson and Coupland, January 1935, Templewood Papers VII/5/4–VII/6/1.

pronouncement of 1929, which was nothing more than a restatement of Montagu's declaration, and hoped that, once India had met many remaining conditions, it would "ultimately" join the British Commonwealth. By stating that the British would judge when India had in fact matured enough to warrant Dominion status, of course, Hoare was making it clear to his own party that such recognition was unlikely to occur anytime soon. Hoare's only mention of the troublesome phrase came when he quoted Irwin's six-year old pledge of eventual Dominionhood for India.[167] Like Balfour, Hoare had shown a flair for the enigmatic, and his words did not excite the backbenches overmuch. Though still concerned, he informed Willingdon after the event: "It turned out as I expected, the more reasonable Conservatives seem to have accepted it, but there would certainly have been a landslide if we had gone further," and he assured the Viceroy that "the extreme right tried to make heavy trouble over my statement, but they did not succeed in their efforts. It was, however, clear to me that I went as far as I could without the gravest risk of endangering the Bill with moderate Conservatives."[168]

Hoare was always acutely sensitive to what the rest of the party was feeling, and if it appeared that the party rarely forced a turnaround in the Tory Indian policy, that was largely because Hoare had taken account of party opinion, in all its guises, before actually issuing any formal policy directives. In the case of Dominion policy, it appears that Conservative attitudes were not as positive as some historians have argued. From 1926 there was a reaction, albeit largely one of doleful resignation and not violent hostility, to the evolution of a concrete definition of the relations between the existing Dominions and Great Britain. More importantly for Hoare, though, the party's acute awareness of the newly defined Dominion status meant that there arose a corresponding determination not to allow any grant of this status to Britain's most important possession, India. What could Hoare do, unable as he was to isolate the Indian question from its larger imperial context?

Though Hoare, and Baldwin, might have wished to follow Irwin's lead in projecting India as a future Dominion, they could not do so without ruining the larger project of Indian political reform itself. Party considerations, and pragmatism, trumped any hope of accommodating the wishes of Indians like Sapru. Yet Hoare did not seem to see that the failure to assure India of eventual Dominion status might severely hamper his ability to maintain ties with Indian Liberals and moderates. By 1935, Hoare had become so caught up in the process of getting his Indian legislation through Parliament that his actual contacts with Indian politicians had become minimal, and his focus in legislating had narrowed

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167 *Parl. Deb.*, vol. 297, February 6, 1935.

168 Hoare to Willingdon, 7 February and 13 February 1935, E240/4/1234–1241.

to include only the Palace of Westminster and the small world of Conservative party politics.

From this evidence, it is also clear that a definite and formidable undercurrent of opinion existed in the Tory party which saw Indian reform as all too similar to that which had allowed Ireland to slide down the slippery slope and perhaps out of the Empire. Indeed, in their remonstrations that the federal plan not be allowed to produce an "Indian De Valera," these Tories came unwittingly close to describing the way in which Sapru's tactics reflected those of the Irish leader. Yet Sapru's strategy called to mind a slightly earlier figure in the Irish nationalist movement, a similarity which Hoare seemed to grasp for only an instant, though he did not appreciate just how correct his assessment had been. On one occasion, when Hoare allowed himself to ponder the similarities between Ireland and India, he identified Gandhi as "the De Valera" of the Indian movement and congratulated himself for realizing this and for knowing enough to negotiate with other Indians, those who reminded him instead of Michael Collins.[169] Had Hoare known his Irish history, and his Indian politics, a bit better, he would not have made this comparison so breezily, for, like Sapru, Collins had not been as reasonable as he might have appeared: the Irishman had seen gradual steps, in his case the 1921 Treaty, not as goals in and of themselves, but as "steppingstones" towards the creation of an autonomous Ireland. As with Tory discomfort over the formalization of "Dominion Status" and Indian tariffs, this concern with the Irish example testifies to strong disagreement over policy within the party itself. The seriousness of this sentiment becomes even more apparent given the lengths to which the party leadership went to combat it. Flatly contradicting Hoare's early prediction, it proved entirely impossible for him to isolate Irish events or keep them from seriously affecting the progress of his plan for Indian political reform.

Nevertheless, Hoare was able sufficiently to overcome the effects of this source of party disquiet, for long enough, to get his Indian plan passed into law. His success was not achieved solely by alleviating party concerns about India's constitutional status, but his defusing of this issue did, however, help him significantly on this larger front in a couple of ways. By refusing to grant Dominion status to India, or even to promise its attainment in India within any specified period, Hoare could claim to have prevented India from obtaining the constitutional machinery De Valera had employed in his rejection of British ties. In publicizing the elaborate safeguards built into the Indian plan, and comparing these with the lack of similar elements in the 1921 Irish Treaty, Hoare and his India Office staff were also able to reassure nervous Conservatives. The incorporation of various right-wing personalities into the Government team which addressed the Irish situation from 1932 onwards, and this committee's embrace of stiff sanctions against Ireland

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169 Hoare to Derby, 11 August 1933, 920 DER[17] 37/9.

also helped to prevent the growth of real Die Hard hostility. In these ways, Hoare was able to minimize the impact of the Irish issue during the crucial months in which he pressed his party to support him over India.

A Question of Confidence

What the Conservative leadership saw in the mid-1930s was a party concerned with empire, but hardly energized around one vision of it. Some Tories seemed to have moved towards a Dominion-centered vision of the future, while others seemed resigned to the new status of the Dominions, but wary of a repeat of the Irish example in India. Hoare's framing of the Indian proposals in light of these concerns may have alleviated some Conservative worries, but it had not yet, in his mind, convinced the party to follow through on them wholeheartedly. Those party members interested in Amery's view of Empire might see the Indian reforms in a positive light, and some concerned by the Irish legacy, or disheartened by it, might look at the federal proposal as making the best of a bad situation. For those who still appeared unready to go along with the plan, however, Hoare and other senior party figures had a further strategy. The choice of this approach, in fact, indicated that the Conservative leadership believed that the party faithful indeed supported the empire, but did not do so unconditionally.

The pro-reform forces made the point, none too subtly, that the Die Hards' efforts could cause the party to split over an issue, India, which had traditionally remained above partisan politics.[170] The indictment resonated within the Conservative ranks. Similar claims had been made earlier as the party leadership struggled to contain the Beaverbrook threat, and the disastrous results of earlier Tory disagreements over tariffs were all too fresh in the minds of the party faithful. When the UBI published its "Principles and Aims" in May 1933, it emphasized that the Die Hards had "endeavored to drag India into the arena of party politics – a course the dangers of which have always been recognized and avoided."[171] In a provocative speech at Worcester in late April 1933, Baldwin warned that imperial survival required "national unity," thus accusing the Die Hards not only of endangering Tory political strength, but the future of the

[170] Graham Stewart has already raised the issue of Hoare's and Baldwin's claims that India could split the party and that the issue was one in fact of confidence in the Government. However, Stewart's work focuses on the party conferences alone as instances where the party leaders pursued this strategy, while this book examines the overall nation-wide and full-time effort by the leadership to publicize the potential threat to the National (Tory-dominated) Government. See Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, 143–199.

[171] UBI leaflet, May 1933, RAB F2/12.

Empire as well.[172] The party leadership and its allies continued this line of attack during the entire period of the JSC's deliberations on the White Paper. Davidson responded to criticism of Indian policy in his constituency by declaring that Churchill was not arguing against the reforms in good faith, but that his "ill-disguised intention [was] rather the break-up of the National Government."[173] Duff Cooper declared that the Die Hards were "neither good Conservatives nor good patriots, but bad politicians who are seeking to stir up this cause to serve their own ends."[174] In Wessex, a Die Hard stronghold, these charges were echoed by Tory loyalists who claimed that Page Croft was out to make India into a question of confidence in the Government.[175] Austen Chamberlain maintained statesmanlike impartiality, but barely, when he declared that "there is no field in which ... national unity and ... national sentiment are more essential than in the field of Indian Government."[176] The message soon permeated political discussion; the newly-arrived Hailey discovered "a great number of people in London who are beginning to speculate on the possibility of a break-away by the more Tory section of the Party."[177] Baldwin and the Tory Central Office hammered away at this message through much of 1934 as well.[178] There was only one side to take, the side of the angels; as one party publication put it: "[The UBI] do not seek to cause trouble and split up the party, but support the policy of the Government, and are loyal to our leaders."[179]

These tactics left both Die Hards and those discomfited by the reforms in a bad spot. It did not help matters that the leadership was also lacing its speeches with strong hints that a Conservative split would allow Labour, the "Socialists," to return to power, whereupon, according to the party leader, they would immediately return India to the Indians.[180] Some of the anti-reformers wished to argue that larger principles than mere politics were involved, Lloyd publicly asking whether

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172 *Times*, 1 May 1933.

173 Quoted from March 1933 in Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 395.

174 *Guardian*, 12 June 1933.

175 Page Croft, *My Life of Strife*, p. 231.

176 *Guardian*, 3 July 1933.

177 Hailey to Willingdon, 2 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/34.

178 See Baldwin's message in the *Primrose League Gazette*, January 1934 and the editorial in the same in February 1935; *Guardian*, 9 February 1934; Jones diary, 28 April 1934, pp. 126–129. For the Central Office's campaign against Wolmer as an ungrateful Tory in particular, see the following: Hoare to Butler, 5 February 1934, RAB F3/4/79; Butler to Gower, 6 February 1934, RAB F3/4/79; Gower to Butler, 13 February 1934, RAB F3/4/80; Butler to Gower, 14 February 1934, RAB F3/4/81.

179 *Conservative Agents' Journal*, August 1933, CPA (microfilm).

180 Baldwin speech to Conservative Women's Conference, *Guardian*, 13 May 1933; Duff Cooper speech, *Guardian*, 12 June 1933; Baldwin to Greenway, 10 May 1933, SB 106/60–61; speech by Lord Hardinge at Tunbridge Wells, 14 January 1935, copy at CHAR 2/241A/24.

Baldwin truly expected "that we should subordinate the fate of an Empire to consideration of party harmony?"[181] Nevertheless there was an effect on short-term strategy. When a by-election occurred in Fulham in the autumn of 1933, Wolmer counseled a friend not to stand as an independent candidate against the official Tory choice, for if he "split the Conservative vote at this juncture against the official Organisation, it would have the unfortunate effect of playing into the hands of our opponents."[182]

The party leadership's tactics figured prominently in the most crucial stage of the campaign to gain party approval for Hoare's Indian proposals. In 1933 and 1934 Hoare, Baldwin and their allies brought the case for Indian reform to the party membership as a whole, eager to prevent a grass-roots rebellion against the leadership and its policies. Recent research has revealed some of the maneuvers employed by the pro-reformers, especially the ways in which they played on party loyalty and the threat of a party split.[183] However, these accounts have only hinted at the true magnitude of the party leadership's efforts to justify itself and its Indian policy. Nothing was left undone in this campaign as the leadership approached its rank-and-file in a fairly aggressive manner, not one which presumed the docility of the Tory masses, though one that did make other presumptions.

The party leadership had, when dealing with the 1929 Irwin declaration and the White Paper, preferred to avoid the controversial issue at party conferences or Council meetings. Instead, Baldwin and Hoare had employed procedural tactics to avoid direct votes on the question, or had transformed it into one of confidence in the leadership. They persisted with this strategy in 1933 and 1934 after the publication of the White Paper. The first occasion was the meeting of the Conservative Central Council in late June 1933. The Die Hards were fully aware of what to expect, with Gwynne reminding Conservatives in the days before the meeting that "a vote hostile to the Government's India policy is not a vote of censure on Mr. Baldwin."[184] Writing to the *Daily Telegraph*, Page Croft sourly admitted that the "Diehards are obviously very frightened of the argument that Mr. Baldwin's leadership is involved by their opposition to the Government's India policy."[185] At the meeting itself, Baldwin employed a familiar stratagem in response to some moderately well-received speeches by Lloyd, Page Croft and

181 Lloyd statement to press, 2 May 1933, GLLD 11/1; see also G. Fry memorandum, 1 May 1933, SB 106/45–46.

182 Wolmer to Sir Martin Archer-Shee, 4 September 1933, copy at CHAR 2/194/4.

183 The party's resort to these tactics has led Stewart to conclude that the Die Hards were hardly "an irrelevant gang of losers with whom the government could always wipe the floor." Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, p. 195.

184 *Morning Post*, 19 June 1933.

185 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 June 1933.

Sir Edward Carson, the ancient opponent of Irish Home Rule.[186] These Die Hards proposed a motion expressing "grave anxiety" about granting responsible central government in India, but Baldwin replied that the party should come to no conclusion on the matter while it was under "judicial" consideration by the JSC. The party leader did assure the meeting that, after the JSC had reported, he would "take counsel together" with the party as to the direction of Indian policy, but he gave no more specific pledge as to how he would "take counsel," whether with the Council, the party conference or in some other way. Amery proposed a resolution to this effect which was carried by a vote of 838–356.[187] Pro-reform Tories took some heart from this result, but found it difficult to be enthusiastic over what was no more than an exhibition of Baldwin's command of "the tricks of political leadership."[188]

The India Office and the Central Office mapped out a similarly careful plan a few months later for the annual party conference, held in Birmingham in early October 1933. Hoare again planned to stay away; Neville Chamberlain would be the leadership's main spokesman in the debate over yet another Die Hard motion deploring the White Paper.[189] Butler did his best to make sure that as many moderate Conservative MPs as possible would attend the conference, urging that friends in the press issue a call for such attendance, but drawing the line at having the party whips herd MPs to Birmingham, realizing that it "would be well to underdo rather than overdo any action."[190] His anxiety not to antagonize moderate Tories also guided his opposition to a plan, mooted in the India Office, to move at the conference that the party entertain no further resolutions dealing with India until after the JSC had reported. Butler felt this "would be interpreted as gagging the party + bring more odium than is worth it."[191] But he responded to the IDL's mass mailing of anti-White Paper circulars to all local Tory associations in the weeks before the party conference by ordering the UBI to flood the constituencies with leaflets rebutting the Die Hards' case.[192]

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186 For assessments of these speeches, see Amery diary II/297–298, 28 June 1933; Derby to Stanley, 3 July 1933, 920DER[17] 37/12; Hoare to Willingdon, 30 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/741–745.

187 NUCUA Central Council minute-book, pp. 258–259, 28 June 1933.

188 Derby to Stanley, 3 July 1933, 920DER[17] 37/12; Hailey to Willingdon, 30 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/34; for one gushing assessment of Baldwin's performance, see: Grattan-Doyle, MP to Baldwin, 28 June 1933, SB 106/128.

189 Rumbold to Butler, 4 September 1933, RAB F74/21; Hoare to Baldwin, 8 September 1933, BP 106/129–133; Hoare to Willingdon, 14 September 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/816–819.

190 Butler to Rumbold, 17 September 1933, RAB F74/26; Rumbold to Butler, 18 September 1933, RAB F74/27.

191 Butler to Rumbold, 6 September 1933, RAB F74/22.

192 Butler to Rumbold, 23 September 1933, RAB F74/28.

Although Butler had opposed the plan to attempt to end debate over India indefinitely, the party leaders were prepared to face head-on anti-White Paper resolutions, four in all, which awaited them in Birmingham. Hoare, not surprisingly, was concerned about the result. In this case, he regarded the all-party conference as "a bigger and less responsible assembly than the Council." He also worried that many pro-reform Tories would not bother to make the dull trip to Birmingham from London to lend him support.[193] Upon arriving at the conference both Neville Chamberlain and Geoffrey Dawson found the atmosphere "wild" and full of "perceptible" tension.[194] After Wolmer presented the Die Hard resolution, one which incorporated all similar ones and which deplored nearly every aspect of the White Paper, the debate seemed to follow some familiar lines. Neville Chamberlain, though, concluded the debate for the leadership in a more aggressive fashion. Wolmer's claims that his resolution was not one of lack of confidence in the Government notwithstanding, Chamberlain described Wolmer's resolution as "a direct challenge to the Government" and "a vote of want of confidence in the Government's India policy," and he successfully pressed the party to wait for the JSC's report.[195] Chamberlain in fact told the party's Chief Agent that the vote did not represent a "suspension of opinion but ... a definite approval of the general lines of the Government's policy."[196] However, the conference result was not so clear-cut, and Chamberlain's estimate of the party's response to his speech was not unbiased. Amery noted that Chamberlain's speech had not had an overwhelming reception and that he had not been "too tactful in the way in which he stressed the vote of confidence aspect."[197] There had also been over one hundred abstentions at the final vote, another sign that there was some confusion over Chamberlain's remarks, for, despite his boast of a triumph, the implications of the actual vote remained open to interpretation. Chamberlain had declared that a vote for Wolmer's resolution was a vote of no confidence in the leadership and the Government, but the matter of the debate itself rather upheld the view that a vote for further deliberation was not necessarily a vote for the leadership's Indian plans. Once again, wary Conservatives could simply vote to prolong the process. Party unity was preserved, and hard decisions over the White Paper were postponed. Chamberlain's challenge to the Die Hards had defined their motion in stark terms, but the pro-reformers' own amendment had not met the issue head on, making that amendment an attractive option to those Conservatives who

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193 Hoare to Willingdon, 5 October 1933, Mss. Eur. e.240/3/825–831.

194 Dawson diary, 5 October 1933, Mss. Dawson 37; N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 7 October 1933, NC 18/1/845.

195 Conservative Conference Report, 1933, CPA (microfilm).

196 N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 7 October 1933, NC 18/1/845; N. Chamberlain diary, 1 January 1934, NC 2/23a.

197 Amery diary, II/304–305, 6 October 1933.

wished to avoid it. At the end of the conference, Dawson congratulated Baldwin for having "put it over the Conservative Conference very successfully!"[198]

Although the Tory leadership, and especially the India Office and Conservative headquarters, had focused mainly on navigating through these party meetings, they had not neglected smaller ones, convinced that even small fires might end eventually in large conflagrations. Central Office twice helped pro-reform forces to defeat hostile resolutions at meetings of the Metropolitan (London) Area.[199] Butler recruited his friend Basil Dufferin (the Marquess of Dufferin and Ava) to speak at meetings of both the Junior Imperial and Primrose Leagues, where he was able to counter Die Hard resolutions with amendments which delayed any decisions until the JSC had completed its work.[200] Churchill's forces passed an unfriendly resolution successfully at the Essex and Middlesex Area meeting in early 1934, but not without resistance organized by Butler, who was an Essex MP himself.[201] The party leadership also dealt with the party's northern equivalent, convincing the Scottish Conservative Conference to defer debate on India in November 1933.[202] In late 1934, the India Office dispatched Ernest Hotson, a former Governor of Bombay, to the annual meeting of Scottish Tories where he capably defended the White Paper, especially in regard to the safeguards it contained.[203]

When Baldwin and his colleagues once more turned to dealing with the party rank and file in 1934, it was clear that few in the pro-reform group saw the votes of 1933's Council meeting and Conference as a great deal more than parliamentary maneuvers which had allowed nervous Conservatives, especially those local activists from divided constituency associations, to avoid making decisions which would be hard for them, and perhaps dangerous for the party. There were certainly no assumptions that the Indian dispute was over, and the leadership continued to pursue the tactics which had served them well in 1933. Ominously for the leadership, though, it appeared for most of 1934 that the Die Hards were actually gaining ground within the party. When the party Council met in late March 1934, a pro-Baldwin MP moved that the party should not discuss

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198 Dawson to Baldwin, 9 October 1933, SB 168/24.

199 Hailey to Willingdon, 16 June 1933, Mss. Eur. e.220/34; Donner to Churchill, 12 October 1933, CHAR 2/197/125–126; Donner to Churchill, 19 October 1933, CHAR 2/197/130; Donner memorandum, 20 October 1933, CHAR 2/197/132.

200 Rumbold to Dufferin, 3 May 1933, RAB F73/154; Butler to Dufferin, 2 June 1933, RAB F1/15.

201 Llewellin to Butler, 18 January 1934, RAB F3/3/6; Butler to Llewellin, 22 January 1934, RAB F3/3/8; Butler to H. Mitchell and G. Locker-Lampson, 23 and 30 January 1934, RAB F3/3/12–23; Butler note, 9 February 1934, RAB F3/3/29.

202 Wolmer and Donner to Churchill, November 1933, CHAR 2/197/147–148.

203 India Office memoranda, October 1934, RAB F3/4/32–39; Butler to Hotson, October 1934, RAB F3/4/40.

India at all until the JSC had reported, the sort of "gagging" motion which Butler had decried earlier. The Die Hards, who seemed to have learned something about parliamentary tactics, responded with an amendment claiming the "right and duty" of the party to discuss India at any time it chose.[204] The original resolution passed by 419–314, the closest margin yet. Reports of the meeting indicated that an odd, almost friendly, atmosphere surrounded the proceedings, and the vote was also hard to decipher. It was probably close for several reasons. The resolution represented only a commitment to postponement, and the amendment a commitment to nothing at all; neither committed anyone to any particular Indian policy. Furthermore, the Tory leadership never declared the amendment a direct challenge to them or to the Government. The party leaders, especially the Tory Cabinet Ministers, had all appeared for the vote, but many party members were prepared to act on their own judgment, at least enough to render the leadership's clumsy attempt at intimidation ineffective. The number of Tories who attended the meeting was less than in June 1933, but the Die Hards had come in strength, capturing a larger percentage of the vote although they had not much increased their absolute numbers in the party caucus.[205] In the post-mortem after the Council meeting, however, Butler and others who were responsible for the day-to-day battle against the Die Hards had to accept that the vote had also exposed the delicacy and vulnerability of the leadership's position. After the March 1934 vote, Butler and his India Office advisers concluded that the "stringent nature" of the resolution offered at the meeting had provoked some otherwise pro-reform Tories into opposition out of disapproval of the leadership's heavy-handed tactics.[206] If such tactics continued, they might either gain the Die Hards sympathy or alienate enough Conservatives sufficiently to allow the Die Hards to win a party vote, not over Indian policy per se perhaps, but over the party's right to discuss India. Such a result could well serve to legitimize the Die Hards, and eventually bring any plans for Indian reform to a final grinding halt.

The pro-reform Conservatives, therefore, approached 1934's party conference, held in Bristol in early October, with caution. Well before it began Butler warned against anything which looked like "gagging" the party faithful.[207] The Bristol conference, like the Council meeting six months earlier, proved to be a confusing affair, albeit a much more boisterous one. Hoare had found his colleagues "exceedingly jumpy" in the days before the conference.[208] Butler discovered that

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204 *Guardian*, 29 March 1934.

205 Butler note, 29 March 1934, RAB F3/1/49; Butler memorandum, 29 March 1934, RAB G5/88–90.

206 Butler to Lord Bingley, 28 March 1934, RAB F3/1/44; Rumbold to Butler, 11 April 1934, RAB F3/4/68.

207 Butler memorandum, 26 July 1934, RAB F4/5–9.

208 Hoare to Willingdon, 20 September 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1126–1128.

those gathered in Bristol, whipped up by the relentless propaganda of the Die Hards (who had taken over an entire hotel as IDL headquarters), "would have been a credit to the Zoo."[209] Once the actual proceedings began, Page Croft introduced his motion against Indian responsible government at the center, telling the conference that it was the "democratic parent" of the party Council, and thus had the right, indeed the duty, to speak openly on Indian policy, and that it would not get the chance to do so with any effect again.[210] The leadership's side responded with the usual amendment which reiterated the sense of the resolution of the 1933 conference that discussion should await the report of the JSC and that the procedure could then be established whereby Baldwin would "take counsel" with the Council before framing a final policy. In the midst of the debate, with only three Die Hards and two leadership representatives having spoken, several conference members suddenly demanded the closure of the debate. The Chair concurred, and in a secret ballot the conference defeated Page Croft's motion by 543–520, a margin which caused Die Hard jubilation.[211] Many conference observers felt that Page Croft's success had come from his warning that the conference would never again have the chance to discuss the White Paper policy.[212] And the Conservative leadership was very far from despairing, as some of the Die Hard newspapers crowed they must be. Had they experienced such a close vote anytime earlier in the process, they might have been brought up short, Hoare especially, at this apparent sign that Indian reform might not gain the approval of a substantial majority of the party, the lack of which would taint any narrow victory in the eyes of both British and Indian politicians. Things were different in late 1934. The leadership had realized from the outset that the conference would be difficult, but they had in the end got what they wanted. The party had not formally and substantively discussed Indian policy for nearly two years. The leadership now knew, as they had not at earlier party meetings, that the party would soon debate the issue, as the JSC's report was imminent, and that that discussion would take place on the pro-reformers' terms. Confident that the special Council meeting to discuss India would approve the leadership's policy by a wide margin, Baldwin, Butler and Hoare were able to treat the Bristol result certainly as a near-run thing, but as an aberration as well, something they could soon put right.[213] In his closing

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[209] Butler to Brabourne, 5 October 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/142–146.

[210] Report of 1934 Conference, CPA (microfilm).

[211] Lloyd to Page Croft, October 1934, CRFT 1/15/40; Beaverbrook to Page Croft, 11 October 1934, CRFT 1/4/22.

[212] Amery diary, II/385–387, 4–5 October 1934; Hoare to Willingdon, 5 October 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1136–1142; Amery to Garvin, 9 October 1934, Garvin Mss.

[213] Hoare to Willingdon, 12 October 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1143–1149; Hoare to Sir Hugh Stephenson (Gov. of Burma), 22 October 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/15/110–112; Amery

address to the conference, Baldwin hinted at part of the strategy the leadership would employ when the party came to vote on an actual India policy:

> Equally as it is the duty and the responsibility of the leader [to guide policy], it is the right of the Party, if they think fit, to challenge its interpretation. That is democratic. In sufficient numbers they can challenge it so that it inevitably leads to the choice of a new leader; that is democratic, and that is the way we do things. But I want to say that I am at present leader of this party, and so long as I lead I am going to lead it.[214]

Butler's efforts to cultivate party opinion leading up to the Council meeting on India demonstrated his own appreciation of the value of well-organized public campaigns. After reading the first draft of the committee's report, in June 1934, he judged that the leadership must stress the ways in which the JSC had altered the White Paper, with specific attention to the moderating changes effected by Austen Chamberlain. Only such an explication would, according to Butler, "save our political bacon completely."[215] At the same time, Butler urged friendly members of the JSC to attend the committee's important votes, on issues like indirect election, so that there would be a "good Government representation and a good majority" when the committee divided.[216] In the autumn of 1934, other Tories, like Derby, Zetland and Hardinge, fell in with Butler's plan to highlight the substantial amendments made by the JSC to the White Paper and "really draw moderate people to our side."[217] In the meantime, Butler dispatched prominent Conservatives across the country to address local associations. He urged these speakers to stress the importance of keeping an open mind until the JSC reported, but to also argue that political reform in India did not go against but rather followed the patterns of past history, and was in fact a natural product of British tutelage and imperial trusteeship which insured Indian affection for Britain.[218] With the Die Hards' performance at Bristol still fairly fresh in the

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diary, II/387, 7 October 1934; India Office memorandum re: possible press conference, 8 October 1934, RAB F3/3/39; Butler to Stanley, 13 October 1934, RAB F3/3/43.

214 1934 Conference Report, CPA (microfilm); see also Stewart, *Burying Caesar*, p. 174.

215 Butler memorandum, 4 June 1934, RAB G5/99–104.

216 Butler to Sankey, 4 July 1934, RAB F3/4/30.

217 Derby to Hardinge, 20 September 1934, 920DER[17] 37/9; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 18 October 1934, AC 5/1/675; Butler memorandum: "Minutes of meeting held in Rt. Hon. J.C.C. Davidson's room 12 noon October 29th, 1934," RAB F3/3/77; Butler to Hoare, 2 November 1934, RAB G5/123–124.

218 See Butler's and Hoare's correspondence of October–November 1934 with Londonderry, Duff Cooper, Stanley, Hacking, Cunliffe-Lister and N. Chamberlain, at RAB F3/3/43–54; see also H. Morley's India Office memorandum, 8 October 1934, RAB F3/3/39; Butler to Hoare, 10 October 1934, RAB F3/3/42.

public memory, Butler was adamant that "we must see that our opponents do not have the field of controversy open to themselves during this first important period."[219] When the JSC report was made public in late November 1934, with its recommendations against direct central elections and for the protection of pensions among other things, the party published its own guide to the report, stressing these important changes.[220] The leadership's cultivation of the press also paid dividends, as did the India Office's distribution of summaries of the JSC's work to various editors, for nearly all the metropolitan dailies and many of the provincial papers noted approvingly the changes in the Indian plan and recommended its adoption. Hoare estimated that the Government had support in 22 of the 26 most prominent morning papers.[221]

Having thus deluged the party membership, and the parliamentary party, with masses of information on the JSC's report, the pro-reform Conservatives embarked on a large-scale speaking tour. With the date of the special Council meeting set for 4 December, various UBI members and several members of the JSC fanned out to local party associations, armed with even more pamphlets extolling the virtues of Indian federation, with at least two meetings scheduled each day in late November and the first days of December.[222] The Chamberlains were especially active in the two weeks between the publication of the Select Committee's report and the party Council meeting, Neville on a speaking tour through the Midlands and Lancashire and Austen defending Indian federation in the parliamentary party.[223] Hoare began to organize the leadership's presentation of its policy first to the party Council, then to the House of Commons, which would soon vote on accepting the JSC's recommendations. Hoare had determined that Baldwin would be the only Government speaker, leaving members of the JSC themselves as the main advocates of their report.[224] In all, Hoare told the

219 Butler to T. Catto, 23 October 1934, RAB F3/3/69.

220 Party booklet, "India: A summary of the Report of the Joint Committee on Indian Constitutional Reform," CPA (microfilm), 1934/49, November 1934; Butler to Brabourne, 28 November 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/100–106.

221 Butler to Brabourne, 22 November 1934, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/107–108; Hoare to Willingdon, 23 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1179–1182; Hoare to Brabourne, 28 November 1934, TP VII/4/21; Butler to Sir S. Hyat Khan, 29 November 1934, RAB F3/4/53; Butler to Emerson, 3 December 1934, RAB F3/1/73.

222 For the planning of this effort, see Butler to Hoare, 18 October 1934, RAB F3/3/64; Tweedy to Morley, 19 October 1934, RAB F3/3/65; Thompson to Dawson, 26 October 1934, Mss. Eur. f.137/43; UBI Executive Committee mtg., 28 November 1934, Mss. Eur. f.137/51/14–16; UBI pamphlet, November 1934, RAB F74/41.

223 N. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 27 October 1934, NC 18/1/893; N. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 24 November 1934, NC 18/1/897; A. Chamberlain to I. Chamberlain, 15 December 1934, AC 5/1/680.

224 Hoare to A. Chamberlain, 27 November 1934, AC 40/1/52.

Governor of Bombay, "we are leaving nothing to chance and we are arranging the debate as effectively as we can."[225]

Having hinted at such a scenario during much of the previous two years, the party leadership explicitly presented the December 4th special Council vote on India as a vote of confidence in Baldwin and the Government. One month before the meeting, and three weeks before the JSC's report became public, the UBI had declared that "if the report of the Select Committee is adopted in its entirety by the Government, support of the National Government will be bound up with support of the main principles of the new Indian Constitution."[226] Therefore, when Baldwin told the Council of his support for the White Paper plan, as amended by the JSC, it was the first time in at least two years that the party leadership had identified itself with a specific policy. This was no longer a hide and seek game of parliamentary procedure, but one of support, or not, of the Government and its decision on Indian reform.

Baldwin made an effective, "rather blunt" speech, in which he reminded the Council that he was the party leader and that this was his policy. He conceded that the party could, of course, remove him if they wished, but concluded his remarks by noting that he had the support of the entire Cabinet and of the Tory parliamentary delegation at Westminster; a vote against his policy would be a rejection not only of his judgment but of the entire Government. Baldwin also reminded his party that Labour's "Socialists" had their own ideas about Indian autonomy, an unmistakable warning of the perils of Conservative disunity and of the threat to Empire posed by the supposedly pro-imperial Die Hards.[227] A cavalcade of Tory grandees followed Baldwin in support of his policy, most notably some of the senior members of the JSC, including Eustace Percy, Linlithgow, Derby and Austen Chamberlain. Hoare, never a beloved figure in the party, as usual remained judiciously out of sight.[228]

Although these senior Conservatives made a fairly impressive case for Indian federation, Baldwin's direct challenge to the party, as one Die Hard complained, had already sealed the result.[229] The Council approved of his chosen policy by a vote of 1,102–390, a resounding victory and by the widest margin of victory enjoyed by the leadership to date. Those Tories gathered on December 4th had,

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225 Hoare to Brabourne, 28 November 1934, TP VII/4/21.

226 UBI Weekly Bulletin, 2 November 1934, RAB F3/4/73.

227 *Guardian*, 5 December 1934; Hoare to Willingdon, 4 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/395–396; Garvin notebook 142: "India, 1934," Garvin Mss.

228 Hoare to A. Chamberlain, 27 November 1934, AC 40/1/52; Hoare to Willingdon, 29 November 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1183–1192.

229 N. Chamberlain to H. and I. Chamberlain, 9 December 1934, NC 18/1/898; Amery diary, II/389, 4 December 1934; Hoare to Brabourne, 5 December 1934, TP VII/4/22; Gwynne to Rao, 6 December 1934, Gwynne dep. 10.

at the final reckoning, quailed at the prospect of possibly splitting the party into factions led, on one side, by the party's senior and experienced leaders and, on the other, by Churchill and Page Croft.

Although Baldwin, Hoare and Neville Chamberlain might have guessed, if only from their experience of early 1931, that, if pushed, the party membership was not likely to risk the electoral consequences of a party split, especially when the alternative was not a Liberal gain, but a "Socialist" triumph, they had still left "nothing to chance" in coordinating strategy for the December 4th Council gathering.[230] This not only meant the strategy of playing the "confidence" card, but arranging for UBI publicity to that effect and even ensuring that most of those attending the Council would already be of a mindset inclined to be favorable to the Government.[231] The meeting was not only well attended, but carefully screened. The Executive Committee of the National Union, who directed the Council meetings, had decided in mid-November 1934 that "only peers and MPs who had previously attended the Council should be allowed to attend" on December 4th. This prevented many backwoods peers from emerging from obscure parts of rural England to bolster the Die Hard numbers.[232] Moreover, as one Die Hard editor noted, many of the MPs who did attend "brought their wives, whom they named as delegates" to vote for the leadership's side.[233]

The result of the Council meeting made it much more unlikely that Hoare would face any substantial opposition to his proposal in Parliament. He predicted that "our way should now be made easier in both Houses."[234] His assessment proved largely accurate, as the Commons and the Lords approved of the JSC's report in mid-December by wide margins, clearing the way for Hoare to introduce a formal Government of India Bill, incorporating the White Paper as amended by the JSC, in early 1935.

This overview of the issues and at times real consternation raised within the Conservative party over the future of India, the value of imperial experience, and the problematic legacy of colonial policy-making in the 1920s, certainly confirms that imperial affairs continued to occupy many Tories throughout the interwar years. Such an assessment, however, also reveals just how many different conceptions of empire and sensibilities about the imperial future remained in one political party alone. It also demonstrates that even staunch supporters of empire may have had a limit to the price they would pay for imperial continuity. Such analysis complicates our understanding of the degree to which empire shaped

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230 Hoare to Brabourne, 28 November 1934, TP VII/4/21.

231 Hoare to A. Chamberlain, 27 November 1934, AC 40/1/52; Garvin notebook: "India, 1934," Garvin Mss.

232 Ramsden, *Age of Balfour and Baldwin*, pp. 334–335.

233 Gwynne to Rao, 6 December 1934, Gwynne dep. 10.

234 Hoare to Willingdon, 5 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1193–1196.

British national consciousness, and profitably so, as the history of empire comes more and more to resemble the complex ways in which Britons lived it.[235]

[235] There is a lively and instructive debate over this question of how empire shaped the nation; for various positions on this question, see among others: Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830–1867* (Chicago and London, 2002); Antoinette Burton, ed., *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation* (Durham, 2003); Bernard Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford, 2004).

Chapter 7
Provinces, Princes and Predictions: The Fate of the 1935 India Act

With Indian policy and the politics of it, settled by the end of 1934, it appeared that Hoare's final task, getting the reforms through Parliament, would not be overtaxing. The Churchill family actually helped on the political side in early 1935, albeit unintentionally. Randolph Churchill, standing as a Die Hard, had launched an independent candidacy at the Wavertree by-election in Lancashire. He managed to split the Conservative vote, allowing Labour to gain what had been a very safe Tory seat. Although this was a Tory loss on the surface, the result had, for the pro-reformers, the gratifying effect of sealing their victory within the party, as Wavertree provided terrific proof that the wages of disunity were party losses.[1] Malcolm Hailey, now retired in London, noted that the Tories, in the face of this danger, had begun to close ranks.[2] Among the Die Hards, Lloyd was eager to keep up the fight despite, or perhaps because of, Wavertree, but Salisbury, now battling illness, appeared less enthusiastic, writing to Baldwin that he was "horrified to find the degree to which the disintegration of the Party ... has proceeded." However, Salisbury admitted no responsibility whatever, and urged Baldwin to accommodate Die Hard concerns in order to "consolidate our own Party."[3] Salisbury's request went unheard, since few in the party by that point saw any reason to bargain with those whose ineffective cantankerousness had threatened to wreck the party. Even the Primrose League had deserted the Die Hards in the face of a Labour by-election gain.[4] In the immediate aftermath of Wavertree, Hoare secured a very large majority on the Second Reading of the Government of India Bill in late February 1935.

Meanwhile, some promising reports continued to flow from India, largely from Madras where local officials continued to look to the Justice Party as a bulwark against Congress encroachment. Erskine, on tour in areas where Civil Disobedience had been strong, found that Indians now recognized the "futility" of their earlier

1 N. Chamberlain diary, 24 January 1935, NC 2/23a; N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 26 January 1935, NC 18/1/903; Butler to Lady Butler, 31 January 1935, RAB D48/1070; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 2 February 1935, AC 5/1/688; Headlam diary, p. 320, 6 February 1935; Butler to James, 15 February 1935, RAB F3/2/20; Winterton, *Orders of the Day*, p. 201.

2 Hailey to Mieville, 8 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.220/28B/203–207.

3 Salisbury to Baldwin, 10 February 1935, SB 107/12–13; Lloyd to Wolmer, 19 February 1935, GLLD 11/1.

4 *Primrose League Gazette*, February 1935, Bodleian Library Mss. Primrose League 58.

actions.[5] The only suggestion he offered was that Hoare reconsider mentioning "Dominion Status" as part of the reform legislation, and thus give the Justice Party some effective ammunition in the province.[6] If there were any difficulties in getting the federal center going, moreover, the ever-helpful Erskine offered this: "The Indian politicians down here do not really care whether the Federation comes off or not but what they are really interested in is Provincial Autonomy."[7]

Princely Discontents

The princes presented the only possible remaining hazard Hoare could see. Churchill and his allies had not yet abandoned their own efforts to convince the princes to reject the federal plan and cause a rapid retreat of support for it by still-wary Conservatives.[8] The India Office, alarmed at the vehemence of Churchill's denunciations of the India Bill in the Commons, tried in fact to "stop Reuter[s] telegraphing to India the more poisonous passages."[9] There had been some rumblings in late 1934 as to the position of the larger princely states, notably Hyderabad and Mysore, but these had not rattled Hoare overmuch, although they caused the Viceroy some unease.[10] In February 1935, however, as the princes met to formulate their response to the JSC report, Hoare did reveal that he was more concerned than he had previously let on:

> I very much hope the Princes will not embroil the situation in their meeting in Bombay. I can control the situation here as long as there are no bolts from the Indian blue. If, however, the Princes raise new issues and give the impression that they are edging out, the position here will become extremely difficult.[11]

Despite this seeming premonition, Hoare claimed that he was caught completely off guard in late February 1935 when word came from India that the Chamber princes, as well as the representatives of Hyderabad and Mysore, had denounced the draft of the Government of India Bill which the India Office had shown them,

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5 Erskine to Hoare, 16 February 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/12/24–26.

6 Erskine to Willingdon, 3 January 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/5.

7 Erskine to Hoare, 20 March 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/12/31–32.

8 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 134–135; for evidence of this continued intrigue, see Gwynne to Patiala, 24 January 1935, Gwynne dep. 11.

9 Hoare to Willingdon, 21 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/431.

10 Hoare to Willingdon, 5 December 1934, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1193–1196; Willingdon to Hoare, 9 December 1934, L/PO/5/3/153–156; Willingdon to Hoare, 23 January 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/417.

11 Hoare to Willingdon, 22 February 1935.

declaring that there must be wholesale changes in the conditions proposed for their accession to the federation, especially in regard to the extent to which federal legislation in certain cases, like railways, would supplant princely control of these matters in their states.[12] Hoare's response to this news was entirely consistent with his earlier reactions to the princes: he was convinced that their unhappiness was temporary, and he was willing to negotiate, and up to a point, to concede, even though the much more pessimistic Willingdon believed it "unlikely that Princes will agree to any compromise. A large number, as you are aware, are increasingly doubtful of Federation and its consequences."[13] Nevertheless, Hoare, using language he had employed before in his dealings with the princes, and perhaps revealing what he saw as really going on here, vowed "we are none of us prepared to be blackmailed."[14] As Hailey noted, the good news was that the princes' censure "did not at least represent a definite breakaway," but the problem was that the failure of the princes to accede to federation would simultaneously ruin the plan's hopes in Parliament and alienate Indian opinion, as Hoare was pledged not to go ahead with a federation of simply the British Indian provinces alone.[15]

Hoare was obviously shaken by the hostility of the princes' rejection, and especially by the fact that Hyderabad had joined in this effort.[16] Once the initial shock had subsided, however, he reverted to type. His first thought was that their resolution did not indicate any true antipathy towards the federal plan. He reckoned, as did Anderson in Calcutta and Brabourne in Bombay, that, to repeat the endless refrain, some of the princes were simply employing "the usual oriental habit of blackmail," and that others had fallen victim to the scurrilous lies of the Die Hards, especially the constitutional lawyer, J.H. Morgan, whom some of the princes had retained as an adviser.[17] Hoare was especially enraged by the actions of Morgan, who had been recommended to the princes by Rao and who had authored various articles in the Die Hard press against Indian reform. Hoare called Morgan "the constitutional jackal of the *Morning Post* and the die-hards."[18]

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12 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 135–138. For Hoare's claim, see Hoare to Willingdon, 27 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/436.

13 Willingdon to Hoare, 26 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/435.

14 Hoare to Willingdon, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1253–1260.

15 Hailey to Mieville, 4 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.220/28B/216–222.

16 Hoare to Willingdon, 27 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/436; Hoare to Willingdon, 4 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/10/27–31.

17 The quote is from N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 9 Match 1935, NC 18/1/908; see also: Brabourne to Hoare, 28 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/436; Brabourne to Hoare, 1 March 1935, TP VII/4/63; Hoare to Reading, 4 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.118/34–3–4; Hoare to Anderson, 4 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.207/5/361–365.

18 Hoare to Willingdon, 4 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/10/27–31; Hoare to Anderson, 4 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/9/79–83.

The India Office concluded as well that elements in the Government of India, if not Willingdon himself, were behind the princes' intransigence, hoping to confine any reforms merely to provincial autonomy within British India or to a British Indian federation which excluded the princes. Hoare warned Willingdon that, without an All India component, there would be no reform at all, for many in Britain would not stand for any sort of central responsibility which did not include the stabilizing presence of the princes.[19] As Ian Copland has pointed out, Hoare's suspicions about the princes' motives, especially their desire to use up all their available leverage before entering the federation, were not unfounded.[20] Jayakar, who had met many of the princes in Bombay, told Sapru that they kept bargaining because they had found that Hoare would "yield to pressure if any is exerted."[21]

The princes' expectations of Hoare were in part accurate. His initial response to the news from Bombay had been to assert that some small adjustments to the India Bill would mollify the princes, even though Brabourne had passed on the advice of the Aga Khan to "[g]o straight ahead and present the Princes with a fait accompli."[22] As the Indian Secretary asked the Viceroy, "Does not all this point to a much more active policy with the Princes?"[23] Sapru, ever alert to dangers to the Indian reforms, reassured Hoare that these further efforts to meet the princes' concerns would prove successful.[24] However, Hoare's willingness to make extra efforts to soothe these nobles did not mean that he was prepared to surrender unconditionally to the princes. Hoare remained unwilling to discuss "paramountcy questions," although he was ready to do his "utmost" to alter other offending parts of the India Bill.[25] The India Office decided first that it must dissipate the temporary unity which prevailed among the princes, and set its sights on satisfying Hyderabad specifically. Hoare and his colleagues also agreed that, no matter what, they would press on with the Bill, in the belief that if the Bill passed, "the Princes will tumble in due course."[26] As part of this carrot-and-stick approach, Hoare moved to encourage in press and public opinion the depiction of the princes as idle, "glorified land-owners" whose profligacy was matched only by their pretensions; his depiction of the princes' treachery also

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19 Hoare to Willingdon, 1 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1247–1252; Hoare to Brabourne, 4 March 1935, TP VII/4/24; Croft (IO) to Brabourne, 8 March 1935, L/PO/5/3/310–319; Davidson to Brabourne, 28 March 1935, Mss. Eng. hist. c.562/84–88.

20 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 138–139.

21 Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 139.

22 Hoare to Willingdon, 25 February 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/434–435; Brabourne to Hoare, 1 March 1935, TP VII/4/63.

23 Hoare to Willingdon, 1 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1247–1252.

24 Sapru to Hoare, 4 March 1935, copy at Mss. Eng. hist. c.562/77–78.

25 Hoare to Willingdon, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1253–1260.

26 Butler to Brabourne, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/67–69.

prompted George V to disinvite the princes from his Silver Jubilee festivities in the summer of 1935.[27] This was a severe blow to many of the status-conscious princes. This combination of a willingness to negotiate and a determination to make the princes think twice about the consequences of their actions seemed to yield some dividends quickly. By mid-March one of the recalcitrant princes had assured Hoare that he was not opposed to federation in principle, while negotiations between the Government of India and the larger princely states at the end of March proceeded smoothly, with Hydari, the Hyderabad representative, announcing, for what it was worth, that he was now satisfied with the India Bill.[28] Relying once again on a familiar trope, W.D. Croft at the India Office declared that the impasse had been solved, with only "relatively small amendments," and thus reflected an "oriental mode of proceeding."[29]

While the India Office labored to re-establish princely support for federation, Hoare also had to reassure many anxious Tories, especially those like Austen Chamberlain, who did not want an Indian federation which did not include the princes. Hoare quickly notified various members of the JSC, including Reading, Austen Chamberlain and Linlithgow, of the princes' maneuver, but assured them that All India federation was not yet dead and that the princes were simply playing their usual game.[30] It was also necessary for Hoare to address the Commons on the issue, as the Die Hard press had trumpeted the princes' resolution as the death blow to the reform plan. Hoare now saw the political atmosphere as "fraught with great danger."[31] The India Office hastily put together a White Paper on the "Views of the Indian States," which emphasized that the princes had not rejected the principle of federation, but that their criticisms were intended as the "basis for future negotiations and discussions."[32] Presenting the White Paper to the Commons, Hoare elaborated this line of argument, stressing that the princes had made clear their continued interest in federation and that all would be well after

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27 Butler to Brabourne, 15 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/64–65; Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 139–140.

28 Hoare to Bikaner, 12 March 1935, L/PO/5/3/143; Hailey to Mieville, 25 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.220/28B/223–227; Hoare to A. Chamberlain, 26 March 1935, L/PO/5/3/227; Hailey to Mieville, 16 May 1935, Mss. Eur. e.220/28B/251–256; Hoare to Willingdon, 16 May 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1288–1299; Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 141.

29 Copland, *Princes of India*, p. 141.

30 Butler to Brabourne, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/67–69; N. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 9 March 1935, NC 18/1/908; A. Chamberlain to H. Chamberlain, 16 March 1935, AC 5/1/685.

31 Hoare to Willingdon, 7 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/12c/442–443; Churchill to Gwynne, 13 March 1935, CHAR 2/240A/83–84.

32 Command Paper 4843, March 1935; Hoare to Willingdon, 15 March 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1261–1265; Dawson diary, 14 March 1935, Mss. Dawson 39.

they made some minor adjustments in the India Bill.[33] Hoare's performance allayed the fears of many in the Tory parliamentary party, and only the usual Die Hards divided against approving a new White Paper. Hoare's effectiveness likely owed a great deal to the fact that his explanations for the princes' misbehavior sprang from conviction, not from political expediency, and that he actually believed all would work out in the end. Left unsolved at the end of this month-long controversy, and largely unremarked upon as well, was the problem of obtaining reliable information about the princes' thinking, a troublesome fact that the Bombay machinations had exposed when it caught officials off-guard. The ease with which Rao and other Die Hard allies had been able to exert influence at princely courts, even when the India Office knew that they were there, was another indication of this weakness in the colonial regime. Butler was convinced that the Indian Political Service, charged with watching over the princes, "must be reorganized" into a "powerful diplomatic machine" that would have alerted administrators that "there was likely to be trouble at the Bombay meeting."[34] Furthermore, Butler wished to transform the UBI, now winding up its political activities in early 1935, "into a bureau of intelligence between India and England, which will be nothing but useful in the future."[35] This did not transpire, in part because the UBI had only existed as a temporary political expedient, but also because its membership, retired Indian civil servants, was getting on in years. J.P. Thompson, for one, was already quite ill by March 1935, and he died later that year.

The India Bill moved quickly through the Lords in July 1935, and received the Royal Assent in early August. From June 1935, the Bill had been the responsibility of a new Indian Secretary, Lord Zetland, a former Bengal Governor. Hoare's reward for years of hard work was a promotion to the Foreign Office, where he took over from Simon as Foreign Secretary.[36] Just before he departed for the Foreign Office, Hoare hosted a dinner for both British and Indian politicians who had been involved in the framing of the reforms. Sapru spoke and, in Amery's words, the Indian politician "though intimating differences, spoke with genuine admiration of Sam and genuine appreciation of the Bill as a real foundation for the future. [Sapru] told me privately that Congress would tumble over themselves to work it."[37] Having heard these words, Hoare left the India Office confident that he had secured a brighter future for the British Empire and for himself.

India confounded Hoare's expectations. The one major study of Hoare's activities after 1935 has claimed that he continued to see the federal proposal as a way to put off real political reform, since the complexities of establishing the

33 *Parl. Deb.*, 5th series, vol. 296, pp. 1231–1238.

34 Butler to Brabourne, 15 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/64–65.

35 Butler to Brabourne, 8 March 1935, Mss. Eur. f.97/20/67–69.

36 Hoare to Willingdon, 7 June 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/4/1310–1312.

37 Amery diary, II/395, 6 June 1935.

federation would effectively absorb Indians for the foreseeable future.[38] This was not at all the case. Hoare in fact remained faithful to the conviction, displayed throughout his tenure at the India Office, that federation had to come about quickly not only so that moderate Indians could fulfill their goal of a central, responsible Indian government, but also in order to hasten the division of Congress. He and his informants believed that the federal center would satisfy India's political classes, including many in the Congress, while ordinary Indians would welcome provincial autonomy in and of itself; with such an achievement, Britain's place in India would remain secure. In 1936 Hoare urged the new Viceroy, Lord Linlithgow, the former chair of the JSC and a fellow supporter of speedy federation, to keep up "strong pressure" on the princes to finalize the details of their accession to the federation before the provincial elections took place in early 1937.[39]

Congress and Provincial Elections

Between the summer of 1935 and the elections of 1937, sentiment in New Delhi and in the provinces continued to run towards the idea of eventual Congress participation in the federal scheme, with the corollary that such involvement would ultimately cause major divisions in the nationalists' ranks. A series of intercepted letters and communications fuelled in particular official speculation that a real breach had opened between Gandhi and Nehru over the future program of the party.[40] Gandhi agreed with Nehru's initial distaste for the new federal constitution, but the Mahatma could "not accept practically any of his methods" nor Nehru's conviction of a coming "class war."[41] Even if Congress did stand in the provincial elections scheduled for early 1937, the party's leaders had not yet decided whether they would take office and form ministries should they win. In 1936 Congress decided on the first of these issues: it would put up candidates in the provinces. Nehru, touring the country in support of this effort, found enormous crowds greeting him; "India is wide awake and expectant," he wrote.[42] In U.P., Madras and Bombay, among other places, Congress launched extraordinary, and quite public, political mobilizations, targeting rural areas in

38 Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 148–149.

39 Hoare to Linlithgow, 6 May 1936; Linlithgow to Hoare, 6 June 1936; Hoare to Linlithgow, 22 November 1936, all at India Office Linlithgow Papers, Mss. Eur. f.125/152a/22.

40 Willingdon to Hoare, 5 May 1935, Mss. Eur. e.240/8/753–754. For an example of such intercepted correspondence, see copy of Gandhi's letter to Nehru, 22 September 1935, in Bombay Police Commissioner's File 3001/H/34–35, MSAO III/VII.

41 Copy of Gandhi letter to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, in above-cited Bombay Police file.

42 Quote in Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, p. 262.

particular.[43] The scale and scope of the Congress effort could be seen especially in Bombay, home both to urban workers and rural agriculturists. In the summer and early fall of 1936, for example, Gandhi and Congress politicians organized campaigns of political outreach in rural districts like East Khandesh, while Gandhi also inserted himself as a potential mediator into a major millworkers' strike in Ahmedabad, drawing a crowd of 10,000 there on one occasion.[44]

When provincial Governors undertook to explain the Indian political situation in 1936 to Willingdon's successor, Lord Linlithgow, they continued nevertheless to underestimate Congress's prospects and its cohesion.[45] Nearly every Governor forecast that Congress might get some seats in the new assemblies, but not enough to gain control of them. Governors who had emerged from the ICS ranks, as well as those who were political appointees from London, all speculated with some confidence about political prospects in their provinces. The failures of these predictions were remarkable not only individually, but collectively as an indictment of colonial capabilities, and thus are worthy of some detailed attention. Indeed, this episode provides a real sense of the dynamic of colonial information-gathering and dissemination, and of the flaws inherent in it. It also demonstrates that, at times, even these seemingly confident officials felt the need to issue significant caveats about the analyses they provided.

Perhaps the most active of these provincial officials was, unsurprisingly, Erskine in Madras. Even before Linlithgow's arrival, Erskine had thrown himself into an analysis of local politics. He had in the Justice Party, after all, a group he found worth watching and encouraging, and through 1935 he had as Viceroy, Willingdon, the former Governor of the province who remained keenly interested in its affairs. Erskine's assessment of the situation in Madras grew more ambivalent through 1935 and 1936, likely in response to the very fluid state of provincial politics. In April 1935 he made such a case to Willingdon:

> In regard to Madras, if we were to have an election this year the result would undoubtedly be a Congress majority … It is by no means certain that there will be Congress majority in Madras when the first elections under the new Constitution come to be held. There has been a rather remarkable result in the Municipal Election at Bezwada, held 10 days ago. The Justice Party have done very well there and retain control of the Council … But the present electorate for the Municipal Council is to all intents and purposes the same as that proposed in the Government of India Bill

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43 See G. Kudaisya, *Region, Nation, "Heartland": Uttar Pradesh in India's Body Politic* (New Delhi. 2006), Chapter 5.

44 Bombay Secret Abstract, August-October 1936, MSAO III/VII/53–55.

45 For Nehru's caustic judgment that Linlithgow "saw and heard through the eyes and ears of the Civil Service and others who surrounded him," see J. Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta, 1946), p. 528.

> for the new Provincial Assemblies. So it is probable that the new voters, most of them will be non-Brahmins, will give the Justice Ministry another lease of life.[46]

Two months later, however, the Governor was much more pessimistic, though his thinking would not admit any recognition of Congress's growing strength:

> The Justice Party is undoubtedly going down hill rapidly and the Congress are advancing, not on account of their own merits but simply owing to the unpopularity of their opponents. This in my view is entirely due to the supine indolence of the Ministry. The Justice Party have no organisation to speak of and the Ministers never go about the Presidency explaining and defending their own policy with the result that the Congress is having it all its own way.[47]

The prospect of a Congress ministry taking office in Madras did not dismay either the Governor or the Viceroy however. Both believed that Congress was eager to get back into local politics, "panting to take office" and "secure some of the spoils of office." This meant that a Congress ministry would not act obstructively, but would do nothing "but play the game."[48] Willingdon repeated such a view throughout 1935, in fact, judging that Congress would not be able to resist the provincial legislatures and the "desire for a share in the loot." "[I]n the end," he argued, "they will come in – the loaves and fishes are too tempting!"[49] A Congress victory would not mean a triumph for radicalism either, according to Erskine, for "No Brahmin with any self-respect can join the Justice Party, owing to its communal tenets, and thus the Congress in Madras is full of Brahmins who are really moderate politicians."[50] Just before the provincial voting, Erskine's mood swung again. He now expected the Justice Party to "maintain a firm hold on the Telugu districts."[51] And save for "a complete landslide," Congress would not "obtain an absolute majority over all the other parties and groups."[52] A month later, Erskine reported, "[t]hat landslide has now taken place." Unembarrassed by their earlier failed forecast, however, Madras authorities soon predicted that

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46 Erskine to Willingdon, 23 April 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/8.

47 Erskine to Willingdon, 6 June 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/13–15.

48 Erskine to Willingdon, 14 August 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/24–26; Willingdon to Erskine, 23 August 1935, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/27–28.

49 Willingdon to H. Butler, 7 August 1935, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/106–109; Willingdon to H. Butler, 25 November 1935, Mss. Eur. f.116/54/116–117.

50 Erskine to Linlithgow, 17 April 1936, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/42–46.

51 Erskine to Linlithgow, 6 January 1937, *Towards Freedom 1937–47: Volume I: Experiment with Provincial Autonomy 1 January–31 December 1937*. P.N. Chopra, e. (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 21–23.

52 Erskine to Linlithgow, 3 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 84–86.

Congress would take office, and not obstruct the legislature, so as to ensure "the spate of jobs for Brahmins that their followers had been led to expect."[53]

Hyde Gowan, Governor of the Central Provinces, saw Congress gaining only 34 out of 104 seats, largely due to the fragmentation of local politics.[54] Even when a local Indian notable warned the Governor that Congress would take over 60 seats, both Hyde Gowan and one of his District Commissioners disagreed, predicting only half that number.[55] Indeed, in early 1937, local officials continued to tell the Governor that Congress was only assured of 34, though he told Linlithgow that it "passes the wit of man to guess the final result."[56] In the end, the Congress picked up 70 seats, with Gowan sputtering that the nationalists had made "absurd promises – a free house per man, halving the land revenue, and so on. A sad comment on democracy."[57] Like Erskine, Gowan saw a bright side too. He told Linlithgow that the provincial intelligence officer had concluded that the average Congressman elected was "of very poor ability," and that many of the "more able" men elected from the Congress were not true party devotees "at heart."[58] The Governor of Bihar, who had argued that Congress organization was more apparent than real, due to its reliance on "persons otherwise unemployable," characterized the eventual Congress victory there as "as much of a surprise to Congress as to their opponents."[59]

A vivid example of these officials' struggles with political intelligence was the case of John Hubback, presiding in Orissa. In October 1936 he had estimated that a "weaker" Congress in the region might take anywhere from 12 to 20 seats. Two months later he was more specific, seeing 18 for the party. By January he was hedging his guesses though, noting that if the Congress took all the "doubtful seats," it would end up with 25, but also remarking that his "District Officers … take a view somewhat over favorable to the chances of Congress candidates." When all the votes were in, Congress had 36 seats, leaving the hapless Hubback to argue that the party was "no less surprised than others."[60] Hubback's problems were not, however, entirely of his own making; the information he received from the field was hardly unimpeachable, though not for the reasons he had adduced in

53 Erskine to Linlithgow, 18 May 1937, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/191–197.

54 Sir Hyde Gowan to Lord Linlithgow, 10 November 1936, India Office Linlithgow Papers, Mss. Eur. f.125/12. Hyde Gowan was quite ill as well, another limitation on his ability to gather information in his province. In fact, he left office early in 1938, and died in March, just after his voyage home.

55 Hyde Gowan to Linlithgow, 17 Dec. 1936, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

56 Hyde Gowan to Linlithgow, 13 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 33–35.

57 Gowan to Linlithgow, 10 February 1937, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

58 Gowan to Linlithgow, 26 February 1937, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

59 James Sifton (Governor of Bihar) to Linlithgow, 3 November 1936, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

60 John Hubback (Governor of Orissa) to Linlithgow, 24 October and 17 December 1936, 12 January and 1 Feb. 1937, all at Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

January. For example, a District Officer in Koraput in Orissa had estimated that Congress might take one of the district's three seats; they took all three.[61]

A slightly more accurate rendering of the political scene in 1936 came from the U.P., where Harry Haig had succeeded another senior ICS man, Hailey, as Governor at the end of 1934. Haig admitted that Congress popularity in the province was "definitely beyond expectation" and while he still expected non-Congress groups to get "a working majority over the Congress," he did not believe the margin would be very great.[62] The chief intelligence analyst for the province was more forthright in admitting his inability to predict the outcome of the elections, though he did see potential in non-Congress parties:

> Party politics in the U.P. are in a continuously fluid state at present … Congress have organizational assets of great value, but the local influence of the landlords and the zamindars is still immense, and if only this influence can be fully developed to produce a strong united anti-Congress front, Congress will be hard put to it to make good its claims to popular support.[63]

The report concluded, moreover, with the type of sentiment seen elsewhere in the colonial administration. The overall picture in U.P. was of an "undignified scramble for seats in the new Councils, in which opportunism and personal considerations come first and all others a poor second."[64]

Nevertheless, Haig realized the limitations of his capabilities, or at least acknowledged them indirectly. In his initial assessment for the Viceroy in early 1937, Haig admitted that he was "a little out of touch at the moment," but that recently he had had "interesting talks with Sapru and Chintamani [another moderate]."[65] Within a month of this analysis, in fact, Haig conceded that his officials might not be the best judges of the political atmosphere. Having met and listened to a non-Congress landholder and office-seeker, the Governor warned Linlithgow that:

> I am inclined to think that candidates are at the moment in closer touch with what is going on in the villages and certainly in the minds of the villagers than our district officers are, and I feel that things may have gone rather further than we officially realize.[66]

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61 Hubback to Linlithgow, 1 Feb. 1937, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

62 Haig to Linlithgow, 29 October 1936, India Office Haig Papers, Mss. Eur. f.115/16/8–26.

63 Report of D. Pilditch, Central Intelligence Office (UP), 30 October 1936, Mss. Eur. f.115/16/47–55.

64 Ibid.

65 Haig to Linlithgow, 6 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 18–21.

66 Haig to Linlithgow, 26 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 76–78.

One of the few officials to match Haig in obliquely noting his own limitations was Michael Keane in Assam, who reported in January 1937 that:

> I have scarcely seen any of the three Indian Members of my Government for the last month or more. They are all away in their constituencies and have too much on their minds to bother about files. Administration is in fact being conducted in the old bureaucratic style and no one seems any the worse for it.[67]

The overall result was Congress victories in many provinces, and ultimately the ministries in seven of eleven provinces under coordinated party control. It was, Zetland wrote, "a much greater measure of success for the Congress than any of us anticipated."[68] Nevertheless, both in London and in India, officials put on a brave face and argued that, all appearances to the contrary, the election did not signify a true popular ratification of the Congress. This sort of rationalization had appeared even before all the votes were cast; Herbert Emerson, a long-serving ICS man and Governor of the Punjab, saw "a great stirring of the political consciousness of the masses," but also doubted whether any effects of this mobilization would "be more than temporary."[69] James Sifton, Governor of Bihar, offered the "broad view" that the results were "evidence of the weakness of their opponents rather than of the strength of the Congress party."[70] The Viceroy offered the boldest re-reading of the evidence however:

> It is easy, however, to exaggerate the permanent effect of such a campaign and, notwithstanding the success of the Congress in the elections of certain Provinces, I am inclined to think that they are still far from having such an organization and such a unity of purpose as would make them as formidable as they would like to be.[71]

Post-election analyses returned to the assumptions that had led administrators to think that Indian Hindus, in particular, were incapable of such a feat. The fault lay with the "greatly enlarged and very ignorant electorate," one gripped by "extreme sentimentality and timidity," and one that had fallen for all of Congress's "absurd promises."[72] Sifton believed that 90 per cent of the voters there saw the ballot box simply as a "letter box for Gandhi."[73] Apart from these condemnations of the

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67 Keane to Linlithgow, 19 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 45–46.

68 Zetland to Linlithgow, 1 March 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 183–185.

69 Emerson to Linlithgow, 21 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 57–58.

70 Sifton to Linlithgow, 9 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 111–113.

71 Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 March 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 200–201.

72 Erskine to Linlithgow, 1 March 1937, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/108–112; Hubback to Linlithgow, 1 February 1937, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

73 James Sifton (Governor of Bihar) to Linlithgow, 9 February 1937, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

Indian electorate, a few other themes emerged in officials' post-mortems. There was some grudging acknowledgment of the Congress's organization, but this was often couched in the complaint that other parties had not prepared themselves at all for the elections.[74] Brabourne lamented a lack of "party discipline" in a non-Brahmin rival to Congress, while Haig criticized U.P. landed elites who had fallen victim both to arrogance and to "petty personal feuds."[75] Zetland was more positive when he told the Cabinet that "among parties and groups other than the Congress the real work of party formation is still to come."[76] The Indian Secretary may have found encouragement for such a sanguine judgment in the Viceroy's own rather optimistic sense that the election results did not show deep anti-British feeling:

> It is [Linlithgow wrote] only to the extent that the notion of taxes is linked to "Government" that there has been any direct anti-Government (and therefore, to some extent, anti-British) prejudice raised in the villages.[77]

An even more common sentiment was that the Congress victory was more problematic for the party than a defeat might have been, especially as the Congress leadership had not yet decided on accepting office. Some in the party seemed in fact quite eager to do so: they would "not indefinitely allow themselves to be deprived of the power and the privileges to which they have been looking forward."[78] In the Viceroy's estimation, this left Nehru and Gandhi "both concerned to prevent provincial autonomy breaking up the All-India unity and discipline of Congress."[79] Linlithgow still believed "in the potency of Provincial Autonomy to destroy the effectiveness of Congress as an All-India instrument of revolution."[80] The "provincial outlook" of many Indian politicians would in the end fracture the

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74 For example, see Michael Keane (Governor of Assam) to Linlithgow, 18 February 1937, Mss. Eur. f.125/12.

75 Brabourne to Linlithgow, 15 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 38–39; Haig to Linlithgow, 13 February 1936, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 126–128; for an overview of U.P. politics, and the consistent failure of the zamindari to live up to British hopes, see Peter Reeves, *Landlords and Governments in Uttar Pradesh: A study of their relations until zamindari abolition* (Bombay, 1991).

76 "Confidential Appreciation of the Political Situation in India," 17 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 141–142.

77 Linlithgow to Zetland, 15 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 139–140.

78 Haig to Linlithgow, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 418–423.

79 Linlithgow to Zetland, 15 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 139–140. See also Zetland's memorandum to the Cabinet of 21 January 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 54–57.

80 Linlithgow to Zetland, 3 March 1937, quoted in J. Glendevon, *The Viceroy at Bay* (London, 1971), p. 52. Glendevon also relates Hyde Gowan's experiences, but fails to mention the important fact that Gowan disregarded even the advice of Indians on the elections.

present "artificial unity in the Congress ranks."[81] Furthermore, colonial officials contended that such electoral success had shocked many in the Congress, at both the national and provincial levels, leaving the "more intelligent amongst them … to regret the wildness and multiplicity of the promises to which they are committed!"[82] Hyde Gowan had "a feeling that Congress is slightly awed by the situation" and "the serious responsibilities of Government."[83] Zetland's officials at the India Office concurred, arguing that Congress had wanted only enough votes to become an "effective nuisance without caring for any responsibility."[84] Now Congress had to deliver, but in an environment in which its support, according to Haig, was "very wide but not yet deep."[85] A few months after the election, only a few British officials seemed to have noted the larger lesson learned: "There are fissiparous tendencies in the Congress, which superficial observers are inclined to think must soon break the movement, but past history shows that any such idea is an illusion."[86] The Viceroy, once characterized by Nehru as "heavy of body [and] slow of mind," remained sure that office-holding would bring a more moderate Congress, interpreting the actions of the nationalists as a sign that they had "so entirely and unconditionally accepted our point of view."[87]

All of these explanations for the Congress victories, as well as many of the optimistic assessments of the pitfalls such success presented the nationalists, found their way from India to London, and via Zetland, to the Cabinet itself. The illegitimacy of the vote, the false promises made by Congress to electors, and the potential split in the party over taking office, all of these informed the memoranda Zetland prepared for his colleagues. As an explanation of Congressional success, he offered a picture of rural India provided by Linlithgow: "The villager, trained by circumstance to respect power, voted for the party who appeared at the moment to possess power."[88] As an assessment of the future, the Secretary argued that "[t]he dilemma is one for the Congress rather than for the Government and there is no occasion for us to help them out of their difficulties."[89] And as a vision of

81 Linlithgow to Zetland, 5 March 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 200–201.

82 Linlithgow to Zetland, 4 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 90–92.

83 Gowan to Linlithgow, 26 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 174–175.

84 Laithwaite to Findlater Stewart, 5 March 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 198–199.

85 Haig to Linlithgow, 17 February 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 143–145.

86 J.M. Ewart memorandum, Intelligence Bureau of Home Department (India), 1 May 1937, L/PJ/12/235/38.

87 Linlithgow to Erskine, 12 July 1937, Mss. Eur. d.596/8/306–307; Nehru, *Discovery of India*, p. 528.

88 "Memorandum by the Government of India on Indian Provincial Elections," 19 May 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 542–547.

89 India Office Memorandum for Cabinet, 12 March 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 221–227; see also "Confidential Appreciation of the Post-Election Political Situation in India," 19 March

Indian opinion, Zetland presented to the Cabinet the image of "the vast host of silent Indians sitting on the fence waiting to see which way the cat was going to jump."[90] Among the Cabinet, Hoare was one of the few to offer any advice or reaction to Zetland's report, urging the Secretary and the Viceroy "to maintain contact with the Congress in the Provinces and to seize any opportunity that offered of persuading them to take office at any time."[91] Hoare still seemed to believe in the efficacy of his scheme.

The 1937 elections illuminated many aspects of the British approach to political intelligence in India. The analyses offered by Governors, Viceroys, Secretaries and denizens of the India Office showed the great confidence – at times a confidence undiminished by previous misreadings – many of these officials displayed in discussing Indian politics and in making sweeping and speculative pronouncements. Especially well-assured were those conclusions and statements that drew heavily on assumptions of Indian behavior, old imperial nostrums that possessed a real resilience in the official mind. These assessments drew on other sources too, of course, but here again they demonstrated some of the limits of colonial information-gathering. The India Office and the Cabinet relied on officials who were actually in India, but who utilized fairly limited resources. The Viceroy and his Governors had some access to Indian opinion, but only of an elite sort and, apparently, only intermittently. Even when these superior officials did receive what turned out to be sound advice, either from Indians or from lower-ranking officers and collectors, they were as likely to discount or even disregard it as to pass it on. Complicating the process of intelligence collection even further, of course, was the fact that events in India, especially when subject to a superficial or partial reading, provided just enough support to what were often ill-judged or ill-informed analyses.

There certainly existed tension within the Congress leadership over the question of office acceptance, and over the distinction between taking office to govern and taking it so as to "wreck" and obstruct and further colonial reform schemes.[92] Nehru was himself well aware that his embrace of the latter strategy, as well as his strong socialist sympathies, put him at odds with many of his colleagues.[93] Eventually, as Sapru observed, Nehru "yielded to the strength of public opinion among his followers" and accepted the creation of Congress ministries in the provinces, though Nehru also remained on guard for what he

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1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 242–244.

90 Zetland to Linlithgow, 9 May 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 493–494.

91 Ibid.

92 See J.P. Srivastava to Sapru, 8 March 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 209–210.

93 V. Patel to Nehru, 9 March 1937, *Bunch of Old Letters*, p. 225; B.S. Moonje to M.M. Malaviya, 29 November 1936, in Pandey, *Indian Nationalist Movement*, p. 116.

termed "counter-revolutionary" tendencies among these politicians.[94] Those in Congress who wished to accept office, and to govern thereafter, had a variety of reasons for doing so. Failure to take office might allow other, smaller, parties to "consolidate their power and make [Congress'] work more difficult."[95] In particular, Congress politicians in Madras held this view quite strongly. There, as Hermann Kulke and Dieter Rothermund have noted, the party had not yet consolidated the substantial gains it had made over the past five years against the Justice Party, and office acceptance likely seemed an attractive way to solidify the Congress position.[96] To the notion that politicians were eager to enter legislatures solely for their own benefit, those in Madras responded that the Congress membership had already agreed to cap ministers' salaries, meaning that it was "not the desire for emoluments of office but honest conviction that thereby we can advance the struggle for Swaraj" that drove such a policy.[97] Despite the potential for splits in the Congress in 1937, therefore, these fissures did not actually occur. Through Nehru's flexibility and willingness to compromise, Gandhi's efforts at intra-party diplomacy and, perhaps most important, the enthusiasm of provincial Congress parties for governing as a committed, idealistic party, Congress was able to take office and work coherently at both the local and national levels.[98] A national "High Command" coordinated the work of provincial governments, and in turn these local politicians continued to build grass roots support for the party.[99] The 1935 Act had not, as its proponents hoped, divided the party; in fact, it had done the opposite. After 1937 Congress could claim ever-increasing national support, as it built on its electoral victories and used political power to attract and bind the population to it. Thanks to the India Act, Congress could also claim something more valuable than organization, though. The party now had popular validation as well, putting paid to one of the Raj's most consistent defenses against the nationalists: the argument that Congress did not represent India. The votes of peasants and urbanites, farmers and shopkeepers, said otherwise.

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94 Sapru to Lothian, 26 July 1937, *Towards Freedom*, pp. 782–783; Nehru to G.B. Pant, 25 November 1937, *Towards Freedom*, p. 1194.

95 J.B. Kripalani to R. Prasad, 15 February 1936, in Pandey, *Indian Nationalist Movement*, p. 123.

96 Herman Kulke and Dieter Rothermund, *A History of India* (London, 1998), p. 277. For a more detailed assessment of how the Madras Congress saw office acceptance as attracting politicians from other parties, see Christopher Baker, "The Congress at the 1937 Elections in Madras," *Modern Asian Studies*, 10/4 (1976), pp. 557–589, esp. pp. 575–576.

97 S. Satyamurti to V. Patel, 21 May 1935, at MSAO.

98 For an account of the cheer-filled inauguration of the Congress ministry in the U.P., see Reeves, *Landlords and Governments in Uttar Pradesh*, p. 230.

99 Baker, "The Congress at the 1937 Elections," p. 579.

This Congress triumph caught not only the India Office off guard, but also the princes and many Indian Muslims. The princes realized that their representatives and allies in the federal assembly might still outnumber the Congress delegation, but why now would a party that commanded such majorities in so many provinces agree to such a limited federal role? What further concessions would entice Congress into federation without jeopardizing the princes? Their apprehensions about a Congress-dominated center only increased in 1938 when Congress began to sponsor protests in the princely states demanding that their rulers expand political participation in their fiefdoms.[100] Indian Muslims, on whom the British had relied for several decades as a political counterweight to the Congress, began themselves to rethink the benefits of a federation now controlled by Congress. What would happen to the special political concessions, like separate seats and separate electorates for Muslims, which had been worked out in the Communal Award of 1932? In short, the entire notion that had guided Hoare and many other British politicians that Indians would welcome federation, discarding their quest for independence and Congress's "extreme" agenda, had been turned upside down.

Despite the election disaster, Linlithgow and Zetland convinced themselves that federation still might work. In words which echoed earlier arguments, the Viceroy and the Indian Secretary reckoned that it was still possible that the experience of taking office might prompt the Congress "right wing" to detach itself from Nehru and the party's leadership. If the princes could then be coaxed into entering the federation, it might be possible to create a majority of princely representatives, non-Congress politicians and Congress moderates which would isolate the Congress "extremists."[101] Zetland and Linlithgow were even willing to make further concessions to the princes if need be, to get them into the federation.[102] It was at this point in 1938, and only then, that Hoare began to counsel the Cabinet, albeit with little success, not to make any further concessions or moves towards federation, but to wait and see what developed. It is likely that the events of 1937 had demonstrated to Hoare just how badly he had misinterpreted the nature of Indian politics. He realized that his hope for a "moderate" triumph in India had been entirely misplaced; the need now was to contain the damage. As he warned Zetland, delay would prevent the princes from rejecting any final British offer on federation outright; such a rejection would give the British nothing to fall back on when British Indian politicians of all stripes then demanded a federation of the British Indian provinces alone – leaving the

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100 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 157, 163–174.

101 Zetland to Linlithgow, 9 May, 21 and 28 June, 12 July 1937, all at India Office Zetland Papers, Mss. Eur. f.609/8.

102 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 178–182; Zetland to Linlithgow, 6 and 13 December 1937, 20 February and 20 December 1938, all at Mss. Eur. f.609/8.

British to choose between denying this demand, thus provoking Indian outrage, or giving in, and thus allowing Congress to control much of India. Hoare argued that the Cabinet must "postpone the evil day" of facing the princes with Britain's ultimate offer for "as long as possible [and] we should not try to force the pace."[103] Hoare had another argument against further concessions to the princes as well. As he told Linlithgow, too many concessions would only weaken an already very loose federation and therefore "would rightly enrage British India," perhaps so much that even moderate British Indian politicians would withdraw their apparent support for the scheme. To Hoare, the best option seemed to be to do nothing; his hope was that the princes would enter eventually out of "fear" in order to confront the Congress over the future of the princely states. His implication was that the risk of Indian discontent with delay was worth taking, considering the damage which an outright rebuff by the princes might do.[104] He offered neither advice nor speculation on how the situation might resolve itself. The Congress Party's capture of so many provincial seats, and its subsequent ability to keep a sense of unity among its ministries, had exposed the fatal flaw in the federal scheme: the plan's reliance, its conviction, in the inability of the Congress to resist local political entanglements, patronage rivalries and fractures (both in and between provinces). The existence of an organized Congress bloc rendered the federation inoperable, at least in the form in which the 1935 Act envisioned it. Congress would not enter that construction, while the princes would resist any dramatic changes. This sort of stalemate was not Hoare's original intention, for it committed Britain to a policy of limitless delay in the face of a vocal and structured Congress Party, but it was the least objectionable of the very poor choices the Raj faced.

Linlithgow and Zetland pressed on, offering further concessions to the princes, and extending the deadline by which the princes had to respond. Given the remote likelihood of a settlement that satisfied all parties, the onset of war in September 1939 did not prevent the realization of some lasting federal solution, but simply brought an already-misguided process to an end. The advent of war threw Indian politics generally into disarray. Linlithgow had declared India's entry into the war without consulting Congress, prompting the party to resign en masse from the provincial legislatures and to begin a new civil disobedience campaign – the "Quit India" movement. Muslim politicians used the opportunity of war to declare their support of Britain, and then to appeal for a separate Muslim homeland free from Congress control. British initiatives during the war to resolve the Congress-Muslim conflict foundered on the Pakistan (separate homeland) issue and on Indian anger that the British had not done more to address the great famine which hit Bengal in 1942 and 1943. Meanwhile, thousands of

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103 Zetland to Brabourne, 2 August 1938, Mss. Eur. f.609/10.

104 Hoare to Linlithgow, 7 November 1938, Mss. Eur. f.125/152a/22; Bridge, *Holding India*, pp. 149–151.

Indian soldiers, captured by the Japanese at Singapore in 1942, were recruited from POW camps by the nationalist hard-liner Subhas Chandra Bose to form the Indian National Army, which joined the Japanese in an unsuccessful invasion of Assam in northeastern India in the summer of 1944. Bose perished soon after in a plane crash, but, at war's end, other members of the INA stood trial in India, but had their sentences commuted after a spirited and able public campaign led by counsel who included Nehru and Sapru. The British, war-weary and finally cognizant of the depth of Indian antipathy, left India in August 1947, having overseen an agreement to partition the subcontinent into India and Pakistan. Partition prompted horrific violence on both sides of the new border, and this division has dominated South Asian geopolitics for the past half-century.

In the early 1950s, Hoare, now Viscount Templewood, set out to defend himself and his policy decisions in his memoirs. After consulting Irwin, now Lord Halifax, Hoare constructed a defense which blamed Churchill for the failure of the 1935 Act to appease Indian nationalism.[105] This account deemed Churchill responsible for the long time it took to get the federal plan through Parliament, and condemned the former Die Hard for having alienated Indian opinion which might otherwise have been more friendly disposed towards the provisions of the Act.[106] Such an attempt to saddle Churchill with the 1935 Act's failure is, of course, hardly credible. Although, as Ian Copland has noted, the Die Hards' rhetoric and lobbying may have prompted the Indian princes to doubt the wisdom of federation, there is also ample evidence that the princes' evasiveness about the federal plan had multiple causes, many of which pre-dated the Die Hards' warnings.[107] Furthermore, while the Die Hards certainly sought to derail Hoare's plan during its passage through the legislature, especially in regards to the privilege issue in 1934, they were not the sole reason for the Act's deliberate pace. Hoare himself had designed a process for the adoption of the federal plan which included massive amounts of consultation with the Tory party along the way. And Hoare had adopted this strategy not because of Die Hard agitation, but because he saw that there were many in the party who were uneasy about further Indian autonomy. Only through the use of bodies like the JSC did Hoare think it possible to meet the objections and concerns of both important party constituencies, like the Lancashire lobby, and prominent Tory politicians, like Austen Chamberlain and Derby. Furthermore, during these years, India Office advisers and politicians like Sapru had reassured the Indian Secretary that such a long drawn-out process would not have any real impact on Indian acceptance of the federal scheme.

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105 Templewood-Halifax correspondence, July 1953, Mss. Eur. e.240/76/104–116.

106 Templewood, *Nine Troubled Years*, pp. 102–103.

107 Copland, *Princes of India*, pp. 142–143.

Why did Hoare offer such a clearly inadequate explanation of the failure of the federal plan to quiet Indian political agitation? Some historians have argued that he was simply trying to cover up the original intent behind the federal plan. That is, that he did not wish for anyone to know how cynical and calculated his intentions had been. His real intent had been to construct a federation so hard to achieve that it would tie up India for years, and that, even if the federal system did take shape, its organization and distribution of power would prevent even a large Congress contingent from ever gaining control at the center. Hoare's goal was not indefinite delay of a political solution in India. All India Federation was, instead, Hoare's effort to supplant and weaken Congress itself, so that it could never even come into the center in strength, by attracting a coalition of moderate, non-Congress Indians, and indeed some from that party's less "extreme" wing, who would in turn receive public support from the majority of the Indian populace, whom, as we have seen, Hoare presumed to be innately parochial and even conservative.

In 1953, as he wrote his memoirs, Hoare surely realized that he had guessed wrong, but he was naturally loath to admit the failure of a policy flowing from the intellectual arrogance of empire, cultural presumption and misinformation (some swallowed out of sheer gullibility), a policy which, for these reasons, was doomed from the start. Rather, his memoir offered one final chance to salvage his own reputation by highlighting the one real legislative triumph he had enjoyed. Moreover, his account could do so while simultaneously labeling the war hero Churchill, Hoare's old nemesis, as responsible for losing India. In fact, the downward trajectory of Hoare's career after the India Office had moved in tandem with Churchill's rise to glory as Britain's savior. In December 1935, while the League of Nations ponderously elaborated its response to Mussolini's invasion of East Africa, Hoare and Pierre Laval, the French Foreign Minister, agreed to back down from confronting Mussolini and accept the new situation in Africa. The Hoare-Laval pact, one of the first manifestations of the strategy of appeasement towards dictators which Britain and France would employ until 1939, caused an outcry in Britain, where both politicians and the public had begun to take seriously the need for British rearmament and collective security in Europe. Hoare resigned under pressure, although he returned to the Cabinet a year later, first at the Admiralty, then as Home Secretary, after an appropriate period of political exile. Hoare's friendship with Chamberlain, and his support of the latter's conciliatory policy towards Nazi Germany, effectively ended his career however. Upon becoming Prime Minister in 1940, Winston Churchill brought into Government some of his old Die Hard friends, including Lloyd and Page Croft, and he dispatched Hoare, his former nemesis, to spend the war as British ambassador in Madrid.

Although few fell as far, or as fast, as Hoare, others who had supported the Indian federal plan also found their situations changed within a decade or so of the Act's passage. Irwin, another Chamberlainite, became Lord Halifax

and wartime ambassador to Washington. R.A. Butler completed a long and distinguished political career, but never reached his goal of the premiership. Some provincial governors, like Haig, retired from Indian service; others like Anderson and Erskine, political appointees, came back to Westminster. Cancer claimed Brabourne, quite rapidly, in 1939; in a cruel twist, his widow died alongside the last Viceroy, Lord Mountbatten, in an IRA attack on the Irish coast in 1979.

In India Sapru returned to his advocacy. In 1942 he helped bring about the Cripps mission to India, with its notable declaration about India's Dominion Status at the end of the war.[108] His appearance as defense counsel at the Red Fort trials of INA soldiers in late 1945 (alongside his former junior, Nehru) was another indication of the rapport he had always been able to maintain with Indians of all stripes, and of his uncanny ability to be present at most major Indian events of the mid twentieth century. When he died in 1949, he was consulting on the construction of the new Indian constitution. M.R. Jayakar turned more completely from politics, focusing instead on education and particularly the establishment of the University of Pune, where today the library bears his name. Malcolm Hailey lived until 1969, and was then buried in a family plot in India. Having retired from the U.P. in 1934, the ever-active Hailey spent his later years traveling through Britain's African colonies, assessing political institutions and Africans' capacities for self-government. He had had, one might say, an interesting experience with such matters before.

108 Low, *Britain and Indian Nationalism*, Chapter 8.

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Conclusion

The 1937 Indian provincial elections did not mean the end of British rule there, though that would follow within a decade. The Congress triumph of 1937 did nevertheless spell the end of a certain era in British colonial history. In fact, the entire process of forming, negotiating and implementing the 1935 India Act, the precursor to these elections, indicated – or at least does so in hindsight – that such a development in the imperial system was likely, if it was not indeed already underway. From the late nineteenth century, the "Raj" had stood at the center of Britain's imperial life, or at least so its champions had claimed – for they had placed it there. It represented the triumph of order and duty over chaos and the moral integrity of colonial rule, and was the foundation for Britain's claim to global pre-eminence. Britain and its colonial state mutually constituted each other; questions of the former's capacity for rule in India and of a future without this territory went largely unasked, based as they were on barely comprehensible presumptions.

The discussions and debates that surrounded the making of the 1935 Act revealed just how thoroughly the culture, vocabulary and ideas that accompanied or followed from the notion of a "Raj" permeated elite imperial society. Between those who supported Indian federation and those who opposed it, the major source of discord was not over what Indian society was, but over what this understanding meant for the future shape of British rule. The belief in Indian political incapability, personal weakness and corruptibility, as well as the inclination to see permanent fractures within Indian society, remained common among all involved on the British side. Such a vision of India allowed for the discounting of nationalist achievements there, but it also prompted different proposals for how to deal with Gandhi and his troublesome comrades. True believers like Page Croft could accept provincial autonomy if required, as such an arrangement remained just barely within their conception of a divided India, but they could not go further, arguing that a centralized, partially Indian-controlled state was an impossibility and thus a dereliction of British moral duty. Hoare, Irwin and their colleagues saw India much as Page Croft did, but they viewed Indians' supposed political immaturity as something to be exploited, to Britain's ultimate benefit. Publicly, these Conservatives defended their reforms by invoking one understanding of the Raj, that of it as the nurturing and disinterested guardian. In their policy planning, however, they relied on another aspect of Raj culture: the belief that British rule, observation and capacity had rendered India comprehensible and thus allowed Britons to understand Indians better than Indians understood themselves.

The events of the 1930s demonstrated the hollowness of many of these claims about the characteristics and capabilities of the British colonial state in India. The powerful, benevolent and intelligent "Raj" remained more a construct

than a concrete entity; it was a product of empire, not a driving force within it. The emergence of the Indian Congress party was, of course, the most visible sign that the British position in India was not as secure as it once seemed. The rise of Gandhi and Nehru, and the popular following the nationalists gathered throughout India, indicated great dissatisfaction with British rule, beneficent though it purported to be. The argument of colonial administrators and champions of empire that the Congress did not truly represent the real India foundered on the election results of 1937. Imperial supporters contended that the rise of an Indian political consciousness meant the ultimate triumph of British stewardship, but given the invective hurled by officials and politicians towards Indian political actors, and given the rather cynical schemes concocted to keep India British, such assertions did not ring true. Such rhetoric was consolatory, not exculpatory, and it obscured just what had happened at the heart of the empire.

While Congress successes demonstrated the failure of Britain to turn Indian hearts and minds, the response of colonial policy-makers to the nationalists exposed the apparatus of the colonial state as inefficient, unproductive and, in the end, hardly omniscient. The ability of the Indian administration to collect reliable information was significantly compromised by the structural obstacles and fiscal constraints colonial officials faced in the interwar years. More important, however, British efforts to analyze Indian political actions, and to propose counter-measures to them, remained confined by the cultural presumptions that politicians and administrators used as the foundation for their judgments. The problem was not simply that the Raj lacked information, though that was the case often enough, and the impetus for many to let belief stand for fact. The real trouble was that many in India and in London remained wedded to these assumptions even when they possessed viable intelligence to the contrary.

The most noticeable result of this culture-based approach to Indian politics was the continued underestimation by colonial authorities of the political capabilities and interests of India's massive rural population. Not all peasants became nationalists, by any means.[1] Yet many more rural Indians took to the Congress platform, to Gandhi and to opposition to British rule than seemed conceivable to most colonial administrators throughout the 1930s. And even when the Indian peasantry failed to act as predicted, British officials proved themselves quite skilled at rationalizing and explaining away what had happened, leaning on ideas about "outside agitators" or religious fervor. They failed to recognize among Indian villagers and agriculturists what one historian has called a "rural patriotism," in which local issues and grievances against the Raj propelled peasants into greater political activity and more active identification with the larger nationalist

1 On this point, see Chaturvedi, *Peasant Pasts*, esp. pp. 227–228.

movement."[2] Underlying the entire idea of the Raj was British responsibility for an uneducated, docile and vulnerable Indian peasantry. Those Britons who saw empire as moral duty could hardly relinquish the notion of child-like peasants without having to concede their own rationale for colonial rule. Yet the notion of an immutable rural India was pervasive enough in imperial culture to affect even those who looked at India more strategically – even cynically – and leave them as well convinced that no such thing as a political peasant existed there. This depiction also gave the latter some useful rhetoric for couching their actions in the guise of imperial stewardship. Ultimately, wishful thinking prevailed, for this vision of village India allowed these groups, respectively, to argue for a continued British presence in India, and to plan just how to achieve that.

Among those who provided reliable assessments to British were Indians themselves, such as the unnamed informant whose prediction of the 1937 election result Hyde Gowan assiduously ignored. Here was yet another vulnerability of the Raj: its use of, and thus its reliance on, a very narrow slice of Indian society for indigenous information. Such a situation allowed Indians like Sapru to engage in a fairly complicated give-and-take with both the colonial administration and the India Office. Usually characterized as a mediator between the British and the Congress, or as some sort of facilitator within the colonial political world, Sapru has emerged in this study as an even more knowing actor. Fully cognizant of his influence within official circles, Sapru acted with great intention to interpret Indian political developments for his audiences in ways favorable to the progress of Indian self-rule. He seemed to have grasped the dynamics of colonial political intelligence as keenly as he understood the ramifications of sustained, if incremental, political reform. Sapru did not look to shake British cultural impressions of India. He did, however, work to ensure that these beliefs did not jeopardize the project of political concessions. If Sapru could convince high-level officials and politicians that, despite appearances, Indians really did mean to accept and work the reforms, he could alleviate any anxieties about what the reforms meant for the future of British India. Sapru's success came at a cost, as growing British confidence in the willingness of Indians to accept gradual reform meant a reduction in the scope of the reforms after 1932. Nevertheless, the Congress triumphs of 1937 owed a great deal to the acumen he demonstrated not only in his understanding of the politics of colonial rule, but also in his appreciation of the opportunities the colonial need for intelligence gave him. No "comprador babu," he was an opinionated, sometimes controversial, but highly effective force in India's freedom struggle.[3]

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[2] Bayly, *Origins of Nationality*, pp. 125–127.

[3] This phrase comes from William Pinch: "A 'British India' existed only insofar as comprador '*babus*' made the daily passage from the one India to the other, and suffered the

The weaknesses apparent, and inherent, in the British administration of India in the mid-1930s did not provoke a wholesale rethinking of imperial rule in Britain itself. The historian's conclusion that the Raj, as conceived in its Victorian and Edwardian incarnation, was a casualty of 1937 was not a popular judgment at the time. However, the responses and actions generated by the emergence of the Indian federal scheme indicated that ideas in Britain about India had shifted in some perceptible degree. While India remained valued, it no longer seemed indispensable to Britain and to the British self-image, nor did its presence in the empire seem absolutely assured in perpetuity. The loss of Ireland in the early 1920s meant that the decline of Empire overall was not unthinkable; it was indeed very possible. Furthermore, the future of the imperial economic system in the post-war world now seemed to lie with the Dominions, not with captive markets for British manufactured goods. Given these conditions, some supporters of the Empire proved receptive, albeit with some trepidation, to political reforms that gave Indians much more power than they had ever enjoyed before, in the hope that these concessions would reduce the attractiveness of the nationalist cause. There was more to it than that however. Conservative supporters of the reforms, like Hoare, Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, ultimately got their way by making Indian policy into a larger question of party confidence and unity. These senior Tories saw grave concerns among the faithful over the potential for Indian reforms to undermine long-term British rule quite quickly. The party leadership wagered, nevertheless, that Tories would line up behind the reforms rather than court deep party animosity and possible political disaster. This proved to be the case, confirming the tactical skill of these experienced politicians. It demonstrated something even more significant, though, as it showed that Conservative supporters of continued British control of India, when pressed, were more willing to cast a vote for a plan that they believed carried some risk for sustained colonial rule in India than they were to oppose the scheme and thus, they thought, possibly cause their party's collapse. Consciously or not, these Conservatives had declared that they could more easily live with a Congress-ruled India than a Labour-ruled Britain. The politics of Indian reform showed that the Raj no longer commanded an inviolable position in the British public imagination or self-image, if indeed it had ever done so in the first place.

The 1935 Government of India Act remains ultimately valuable historically for what it did and for what it was, even though it never attained the goals for which it was designed. In its conception and motivation, in its intent to keep India British and in its proponents' confidence in their ability to discern a "real" India, the Act embodied the imperial sensibility – the "Raj" mentality – at its height. Based on flawed and arrogant analyses, however, the Act also revealed

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psychocultural traumas that went with that passage." William Pinch, "Same Difference in India and Europe," *History and Theory* 38/3 (1999), pp. 389–407, esp. p. 391.

significant weaknesses in the operation of the colonial state in India and Britain. The political debates that accompanied this legislation's progress from conception to enactment, furthermore, exposed a much more tenuous public relationship with the Indian empire than popular rhetoric might have indicated. Lastly, the true legacy of the Act was not a strengthened colonial regime, but in fact a powerfully legitimized and popular nationalist organization in India. The Act stands, therefore, as the pivot point in the late history of British India, both the last stand of the Raj and the start of India's final march to independence and partition. This moment was, to take the words of that old Die Hard, both the end of the beginning and the beginning of the end.

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